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1940

THE IVORY GATE.

VOL. II.

THE IVORY GATE.

BY



MORTIMER COLLINS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE IVORY GATE.

CHAPTER I.

ASTU.

"Sir, we all of us know that we hold erroneous opinions, but we do not know which of our opinions these are, for if we did, they would not be our opinions."

TWO hundred miles in a railway carriage alone by night—'tis a favourable opportunity for reflexion. Paul reflected, with the aid of a good many cigars. The result of his meditation was entirely in favour of the advice given him by the Recluse. His conduct would be deemed Quixotic, he knew; but he felt that it would be right. All through that

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long journey he was thinking of what his various friends would say of his behaviour, and of the small jokes which of necessity would be perpetrated as to his fitness for a sinecure at Colney Hatch. But the conviction that Lord Latimer would treat him with contemptuous cynicism, that Tom Harington and others like him would laugh at him uproariously, in no degree altered his intention.

Moreover, there was one person whose opinion he felt sure would be in favour of the course on which he had decided. This was Aurora Elmore. He knew, by a kind of intuition, that this young lady would promptly approve of his determination to resign his secretaryship. I suppose it cannot be denied that, if a man is in doubt as to his right course, his best adviser will be a woman who loves him. Paul had not asked Aurora's advice,

yet he came to the conclusion that he knew what that advice would be.

He got home at a very early hour in the morning, and went quietly to bed. At about noon he was sitting in his dressing-gown, breakfasting lazily, and reflecting on his past and his future. Suddenly entered Mr. Staley, to whom his arrival had been made known.

"Sit down, Mr. Staley," said our hero. "Take a cigar. Tod-Heatley charges me only thirty-six shillings for this Pomard, and it is not all a bad breakfast wine. I hope my absence has not inconvenienced you?"

"Not at all, sir, not at all," said Staley, taking a cigar from the box, and filling a tumbler with Burgundy. "But you see what the new Ministry are proposing to do. They talk of abolishing the Commission. I never heard of anything so ini-

quitous. Of course the Constitutional Party will strongly oppose such a proceeding."

"Upon my word, Mr. Staley," said Paul, "I don't know, and I don't very much care. Before I heard of this I had made up my mind to resign my secretaryship."

Staley almost started from his seat. The idea of resigning two thousand a year was really too much for him.

"Well, sir," he said when he had regained a certain amount of composure, "of course you won't think of resigning *now*. If they shut up the office they must give you a retiring pension, and it could not well be less than eight hundred a year."

Paul Véryan made an evasive reply, not caring to discuss the matter with a man like Staley, who was quite incapable of understanding him. He finished his

breakfast, and then started for Park Lane, to see if Lord Latimer was in town.

The Earl was in his library, reading Aristophanes.

"Well, Mr. Veryan," he said, "Chaos is come at last. Fancy Boanerges in the Cabinet. If it had been Jem Mace, we could have endured it. And as for that dear old Thaumaturgical Commission, its last days are come. Rougemont and Winter will be very glad, I expect: but what will poor Chatteris do?"

"Satan finds some mischief still, papa," said Lady Lucy, who had come quietly into the room. "How are you, Mr. Veryan? I am so glad to see you. Papa, Lionel is downstairs: won't you come to lunch, and bring Mr. Veryan?"

"*Lionel!*" thought Paul to himself. "Egad it was quite time I gave up my foolish flirtation."

"We are regularly turned upside down," said the Earl at luncheon. "It's all over with Whigs and Tories now. Thorold, you're a millionaire: you'd better buy a Greek island, and settle down as a Tyrant and a Sybarite. The House will be intolerable with Boanerges in office."

"Why, papa," said Lady Lucy, "they tell me Mr. Boanerges is the most charming man in company. And his eldest daughter writes delightful stories in the *Charing Cross Magazine*."

"You are turning Radical, Lucy. No, I can stand a good deal, but that man as Home Secretary is really too much. Why, I don't believe he knows whether he ever had a grandfather."

"That question of grandfathers won't always bear investigation," said Thorold. "But I really don't think Boanerges has much harm in him: he is too narrow to

be strong; and his assumed sympathy with the people is very much an affectation. You'll see he'll be a very quiet Home Secretary."

"Still, how about the Thaumaturgical Commission? That seems doomed."

"Quite right too," said Thorold. "It was merely established as a political trick, as you, my lord, know much better than I do. The time is gone by for such devices."

The Earl laughed heartily.

"Upon my word," he said, "I do admire you young men. You all see that the world is out of joint, and every one of you thinks he is born to set it right. You fancy because there happens to be a great outcry for purity, that we are to have it henceforth, and that the political game is to be played fairly. My dear Thorold, politics is just like fashion; it

moves in cycles. There's a period of crinoline, and a period of clinging petticoat. New presbyter is but old priest writ large. Both sides, I assure you, are tarred with the same brush; and the burden of it all is the dear old Viscount's parody on Moore—

“There's nothing half so sweet in life
As Quarter Day!”

“Still,” persisted Thorold, “here is the Thaumaturgical Commission to be abolished. You admit its inutility. Surely this is a step in the right direction.”

“Not at all,” said Lord Latimer. “The Commission was established for a given purpose: it is now brought to an end because the people in office gain ends by abolishing it. They will establish things quite as bad. We, when we get in again, shall in the same way obtain popularity by undoing their work.”

"Then you think we shall get in again, notwithstanding the immense majority on the other side?"

"Assuredly we shall. The movement of affairs is just the swing of the pendulum. You have only to live long enough and you will see everybody on the surface in turn. I am the Nestor of politics, you know, and speak authoritatively."

Mr. Thorold and Lady Lucy Latimer had some pleasant afternoon engagement: their leaving gave Paul an opportunity of telling Lord Latimer that he had decided to resign his secretaryship.

"Well," said the Earl, meditatively, "if I gave you the proper kind of advice, it would be—don't make a fool of yourself. But you have passed the years of boyhood, and are still a boy. You resolved on this before you heard of what is going to happen, and of course

it would be an insult to you to remind you that if you stick to your appointment you must get a pension. So I have only to say, indulge your Quixotism. Throw away your bird in the hand—a pretty plump one—and see if you can catch any of those lean strong-winged fellows that are free in the bush. I admire your high principles: men who act like you are the salt of the earth; but unluckily the earth does not get over-well salted.”

“You do not feel annoyed by my decision, I hope, my Lord. It seems ungrateful to you, when I consider your unsolicited kindness.”

“My dear young friend, I am proud of you. Few people would so resolutely throw away a good income. I hope you will never repent it—and, to tell you the truth, I don’t think you ever will.”

Paul, feeling that his virtuous determination was not originally his own, was anxious to tell Lord Latimer on whose advice he had acted: so he briefly recounted to him his adventures on the Ottermoor, and described the mysterious Recluse. The Earl listened attentively, and remained for some time in deep thought.

“This is very curious, Mr. Veryan,” at length he said. “Your venerable acquaintance said, it seems, that he knew me: I think I know him. Unless I am mistaken, your discovery will throw light upon a mysterious affair forgotten by all the world except myself and one or two others. Be so kind as to say nothing to anybody about this strange old man. And would it suit you to go down and see him again on my behalf, if I thought it necessary?”

"I am quite unattached," said Paul, "just at present. I have a little private business which may occupy me for a day or two. After that, if I can be of the slightest service to your lordship, I will go anywhere."

"Thanks," replied Lord Latimer. "I shall take you at your word, for I know you mean it."

Paul took leave of the Earl, and walked into Piccadilly. It was high tide in the Burlington. He entered that somewhat vulgar arcade—vulgar, yet saved from the abyss of vulgarity by the existence of Jeffs—and strolled slowly upwards. By the way, who is "the proprietor" of the Burlington Arcade? And why mayn't you smoke there? And why can't you get an ice or a glass of ale in that hideous tunnel? You can get bonnets, flirtations, absurdities, assignations, as everybody knows:

it is the sweetest rascalliest of arcades : at any rate it is more amusing than the Lowther. Still, considering the monstrous multitudinous monotony of London, I should like to see a few arcades built on artistic principles and for picturesque purposes.

Emerging at the upper end, and wondering which way he should go next, whom should Paul Veryan suddenly encounter but his friend Tom Harington? Yes : Tom and no other had just crossed from Cork Street, little expecting to meet Veryan so suddenly.

Paul, after his excursion beyond the reach of newspapers, had come back with a singular lack of information. The change of Ministry was about the only thing which he had noticed. Of course he was quite ignorant that the Dezii had disappeared, and expected to find her carolling away

in London as deliciously as ever. Hence it is evident that he could not be aware that his friend Harington imagined him to have gone away with the cantatrice.

Harington on the other hand had never got rid of that fixed idea. He had tried to track the fugitives in many directions, but quite without avail. He had employed Scotland Yard, and coquetted with "Pollaky Perkins of Paddington Green." But no light had been thrown on the mysterious evasion; and Harington was left with the first impression he had formed—that Paul Veryan and the Dezii had run away together. *We*, who have followed Paul through his more innocent adventures, are aware that with whomsoever Diana had eloped, it was not with our hero.

It will be seen that the interview between the two friends was awkward for

both. Harington was ready to attack Paul as a profligate villain, while Paul was prepared to meet his old friend on perfectly friendly terms. When men meet under circumstances like these, it is fortunate that the countenance and demeanour produce an impression before words are exchanged: Paul could see that there was something the matter with Harington, while Harington at once perceived that Paul felt no reason to be ashamed of meeting him. Indeed his first greeting, though somewhat damped by the curious look in Harington's face, was sufficient proof of that.

"How are you, old fellow?" he asked. "I have just come back from the country, and have not heard a word of news, except the change of Ministry. Come into the Burlington and have some cup, and tell me what's going on."

"There's nothing going on, that I know of: everything and everybody's going off. You are confoundedly lucky to be able to take holiday in the country: that's the advantage of having a sinecure. However, you see the Thaumaturgical Commission is to be abolished."

"Yes, I have heard *that*," replied Paul, who knew his friend's variations of temper very well, and quite understood that for some reason or other, or no reason at all, he was now prodigiously sulky. "Yes, my career as a servant of the public is coming to a very early close. But what the deuce is the matter with you? You seem unhappy in your mind. It can't be about the *Rapier*, I know: you have got over that by this time."

"By Jove," said Harington, a portion of his good-humour returning at the recollection, "I am rather pleased about the

Rapier. That cad Eastbury will have to pay me a year's salary, and I know he'd rather have his ears cut off. But look here, Veryan—what's your opinion about the Dezii?"

"My opinion? Briefly? Pretty girl—delicious singer—capital actress—rather given to flirtation. Is she singing to-night? Let's go."

"Do you mean to say," asked Harington, who saw that Paul was not acting a part, "that you have never heard of her disappearance?"

"Her disappearance!"

"Yes, she left London the very day you did, and a good many people thought you were gone off together."

"What idiots!"

"It's a fact. Diana Dezii disappeared, and there was no end of a row at the Opera. Nothing has been heard of her since."

"Who can have carried her off?" said Veryan. "I don't recollect anyone being very intimate with her."

"Nobody was as intimate as yourself, and you were talked of together for some days. Indeed you would be talked of still, only a change of Ministry came, and you were both forgotten. However, I can see you don't know anything about the affair."

"Why, no," said Veryan, "I certainly do not. But I am a good deal puzzled, for I thought Diana was a quiet child, who would not have done anything absurd. Besides, I saw as much of her as most people, and I don't recollect anyone she was likely to go off with except you or me. It certainly is very odd."

"Yes," said Harington, "it is odd, and if we talk about it for a month we shall not get to the bottom of the mystery."

It will solve itself, some day. *Your* disappearance has been puzzling us all: but you turn up quietly in the Burlington, and it is quite clear that there is nothing wonderful or romantic about it."

"You are quite right, though I've had an odd adventure or two, which I'll tell you some day when we have more leisure. You would not expect," he said, taking the ruby of the Ottermoor out of his waistcoat pocket, "to pick up this sort of thing on a wild heath. I did."

"It's a splendid stone, and an uncommon queer bit of gold. I wonder what it's worth. Let us go into Hancock's and see. You may want to take it to your uncle, you know, now that your secretaryship is about to be abolished."

"I don't care to know," said Paul.
"Probably the owner will turn up. But I have no time now to make the in-

quiry: I want to go out of town this afternoon."

"And I've to dine with a fellow, and take his wife to the theatre. I haven't much time. Good-bye, old boy; we shall meet again in a day or two, no doubt."

Away went Harington to his apartment, rather puzzled about the Dezii, but more occupied with thoughts of the lady whom he was about to escort to the theatre. Tom, though he always told his friends, when he became confidential over much brandy and soda, and many cigars, that he had been from his boyhood the victim of grand passions, was easily capable of consoling himself. He liked women, but he never loved one woman. He preferred himself to anybody else—a truly sensible preference, since it preserves a man from such madness as that of Romeo or as that of Othello.

Paul Veryan, having picked up a travelling-bag at his rooms, took a cab to Waterloo. Of course we know where he is going. The advice of the old Recluse had sunk deeply into his mind, and he was fully determined to follow it in both branches. And, being confoundedly in earnest, he could not stay another moment in the metropolis, but must get away to dree his weird by the very first train. Of course, as he was in this headlong haste to get to a small country station down in Surrey, there was not a train available for an hour and a half. And Waterloo is a charming place to spend ninety minutes at.

However, he got away at last, and at about nine o'clock he found himself down in the midst of the Surrey hills, with a walk of about a mile to the little village at which he hoped to find a bed.

For it was evidently out of the question that he should call at such an establishment as the Azure Academy at that late hour.

Paul shouldered his bag, and walked merrily off through the summer twilight towards the village—in the most joyous possible temper, for he had made up his mind to do two things of which his conscience thoroughly approved. What did it matter even if he were likely to ruin himself thereby?

CHAPTER II.

DIFFERENT DIFFICULTIES.

"O my prophetic soul !
My uncle !"

I DON'T know whether the Maine Liquor Law will ever be the law of England: but, if that should happen in my lifetime, I'll certainly emigrate. I can stand the abolition of the Irish Church—Primogeniture may go next, and an act be passed that all children shall be born at once. As to the Sovereign and the House of Lords, though I am as loyal as Rupert of the Rhine, and as thorough a Tory as Lord Liverpool, I think I can resign them without intensity of suffering.

The author is an Englishman

But, once the time comes that I am debarred my Clicquot, my Roederer, my Guinness, my Bass, and I shall exclaim with Mr. Tennyson—

“ Yet waft me from the harbour-mouth,
Wild wind! I seek a warmer sky,
And I will see before I die
The palms and temples of the south.”

That is to say, I'll go to the south of France, where one can get the best of wine without the interference of vestrymen. If we are to have the vestryman style of Government, I say with Sterne that it is done better in France. Let us have an Imperial vestryman, and there an end.

The village street was quiet enough that evening. Paul walked along slowly, looking for one of those havens for travellers which the Maine Liquor Law would destroy. Scent of pleasant flowers came from the cottage gardens on each side of

him—it seemed a village of cottages—and occasionally he could hear a whisper or a murmur near the garden gates, as if a little sweethearting were going on. Why not, I should like to know?

By-and-by he recognized the glimmer of red light through the cosy-looking bow-window. The folk who built those old village and wayside inns knew what comfort meant. What an abomination in comparison therewith is the modern station hotel! He walked into the bar, and the very first man he saw was his previous acquaintance John Eeles. There he was, the thoroughly original Radical whom Westbrook and he had met on that famous walk into Surrey when they encountered Lord Latimer. What a series of events had been crowded into that brief interval! But there was Eeles, the chronic wayfarer, just as homely as ever, quietly

drinking his ale and smoking his short brierwood pipe.

"Glad to see you again, sir," he said. "You seem to like walking through Surrey. Last time we met was where the powder-mills blew up, and we had lunch with that stiff old Earl. But his daughter was a deuced pretty girl, I will say that—a charming little creature."

"Upon my word," said Paul, "I am uncommonly glad to see you, Mr. Eeles. I'm only down here on business for a single night—to-morrow I return to London. I daresay, with the advantage of your recommendation, the worthy landlord will give me some supper and a bed.

That matter was soon arranged: and the conversation was resumed.

"I found that stiff old Earl, Mr. Eeles, a very pleasant fellow," said Veryan. "I

have been staying at his house since then, and I like him amazingly."

"Well," replied the other, "I am made of a tough sort of wood, and I can't get on with your great aristocrats. I liked your friend that was with you that day better than anybody I've seen for years; he's worth a dozen Earls."

"He's a capital fellow," said Paul, somewhat surprised that a man like this should so promptly appreciate Westbrook's character.

"Yes, he is made of finer stuff than you or I, or the Earl either. At least that's my opinion, but I'm a sad Radical; perhaps you think a nobleman *must* be made of better china than we ordinary folk."

"I don't trouble myself much about noblemen," said Paul; "and, if you'll forgive me for saying so, I think your way of talking about them is quite a mistake. I don't believe a man need be either a fool or

a rogue, because he's an Earl. All other things being equal, I should say he ought to be a better fellow than you or me—for, you see, he's likely to be better fed and clothed and educated, and to have fewer temptations."

Veryan sat with his quaint comrade rather late that night, and smoked many cigars in his company. They got to talking of modern authors. Eeles, oddly enough, seemed to have read pretty nearly all the recent books which had any popularity. He commenced a severe onslaught upon Trollope's novels.

"I don't like those books," he said. "They appear to me to look at the wrong side of life. When I was a young man a novel was supposed to have a hero; now Mr. Trollope doesn't know and couldn't be taught the meaning of the word *hero*."

"You are rather hard upon him," said Paul, laughing. "However, he need not

care about your criticism or mine. The public believe in him."

"The public are just like a dog," said Eeles. "You may make them do anything. They'll follow you anywhere, if you once get them to take a fancy to your food. Look at Dickens's Christmas books—the weaknesses of a great genius—gingerbread for that big puppy, the public."

"I have another objection to Trollope," resumed Eeles, after a pause—"at least I had such an objection, only he has lately removed it. I have the same objection to Yates and Helps and Merivale, and a lot of other men. It is that, being servants of the Crown, they devote their time to making money by writing. They are paid enough to live like men—or, as they would prefer to say, like gentlemen—but they love luxury, and so they enter the field as public writers, to get larger incomes."

"It does not prevent their doing their duty, I should think," said Paul.

"Doesn't it? It must. They are paid to devote the whole power of their minds to the work. They just do as little as possible, and give the best of their time to their own private work. I say, it's not honest. If you had a man-servant, to whom you paid fair wages, how would you like to know that he spent his evenings as clown at a circus? Wouldn't you discharge him at once?"

"Very likely," said Paul, laughing. "But the comparison is rather hard upon these gentlemen, who write books of great value and interest. They are not exactly clowns."

"No," said Eeles, "but they *are* men-servants, and they don't do their duty in that position. But it is a matter in which justice will never be enforced, because Government is afraid of you literary gentlemen."

“Do you call *me* a literary gentleman?” asked Paul. “What gives you such an idea?”

“O, anybody can tell a man who writes from a man who thinks. I don’t say you’re a regular hack, you know: but you do that sort of thing occasionally, I’m quite sure. When I was a boy at school I read something in *Phædrus* about a wolf and a dog, and how the dog invited his friend to enter similar service to his own. But the wolf, who loved a free life, noticed the mark of a collar round the dog’s neck, and respectfully declined.”

“Then do you regard all literary men as slaves?”

“The majority. Base slaves. They write in newspapers with all their eloquence at the editor’s bidding, not caring a bit whether what they write is just

or unjust, true or untrue. I recollect hearing one of the ablest of them say that he thought a journalist ought to be like a barrister, and take a brief on any side for a fee. And that's what they are most of them willing to *do*, whether or not they are honest enough to say it."

"Well," said Veryan, "you are very hard upon literary people, but I can't attempt to fight their battle, seeing that it's time to go to bed. I've some important business to do to-morrow."

Next morning our friend Paul, after a breakfast such as one gets only at country inns, walked off to the Azure Academy. There it stood, that Temple of the Muses and the Graces, on its pleasant hill side. He walked boldly through the grounds, not unobserved by groups of young ladies, garbed in three distinct colours, who were sauntering about the grounds. It was the

period between breakfast and the assembling of the classes. The young ladies in white thought him nice; the young ladies in blue thought him old; the young ladies in red did not deign to think about him at all.

He walked up to the stately portico, and rang the bell, and inquired for Miss Elmore. Of course he had to wait in a reception room for ever so long, while Aurora was brought back from some distant part of the grounds in which she was wandering. But at length she came, with the fresh flush of early exercise upon her fine high-spirited face, and extended her hand to him frankly, and said,

“I am very glad to see you, Mr. Veryan.”

Whatever Aurora's private notions may have been, and whatever she may have

thought Mr. Paul had come down into Surrey to say to her, she wasn't going to betray herself, you may be quite sure.

"My dear Miss Elmore," said Paul, in a very straightforward way—he was too much in earnest to begin with a brilliant remark on the weather—"I have come down here on purpose to have an interview with you. You probably have no idea of what I am about to say"—(Hadn't she?)—"but I hope you will hear me patiently."

Paul felt all this time that he was making an awful fool of himself. That isn't the way people ought to make love. You or I, gentle reader

During less time than I have taken to write these twenty or thirty words of impertinent digression, Paul had been looking into Aurora's eyes. He saw something there. What he saw is entirely in-

describable, and if describable would be entirely unintelligible to any one who had not looked under similar circumstances into similar eyes.

All that is necessary to be told in this place is that what Paul saw gave him all the information he wanted, and that, if Miss Priscilla Bettesworth had happened to walk into that reception-room just at the moment, she would have seen her dignified Vice-Principal in the arms of a tall stranger, with her lips not very far from his moustache.

Of course Aurora, having been neglected by Paul, and given up all idea of him, was wanting in what I believe is called "proper pride," thus to accept his earliest overture. But, as saith the old ballad—

"Love will find out the way."

It is my belief that Miss Elmore would have manifested the said "proper pride,"

and behaved herself, as Mrs. Malaprop would say, "as becomes a young woman," only her eyes betrayed her. Paul's ardent glance met hers, and there was an end on't. Useless after that for lips to be cool and civil and cautious: the tell-tale eyes had done the business.

"Well, my darling," said Paul, after much endearment which, if you please, I would rather not describe, "now that we quite understand each other, and you have expressed your willingness to throw yourself away on a middle-aged pauper, the great question is—*when?*"

"I think you are quite young," said Aurora. "I don't care about boys, though boys are always very fond of me. And I don't consider anyone a pauper who has your genius, Paul. But then there is my uncle to consider. I expect him here to-day."

"The devil!" said Paul—to himself—what he said aloud was of a different character.

"Is the amorous uncle, the model of manly beauty, positively expected here? Then I *shall* be in the way? Is he going to stay long?"

"He generally remains two or three days when he comes down. He sleeps at the village inn, you know."

"Of course you could not admit so dangerous a character beneath this academic roof. Well, I sleep at the village inn, too, so I suppose we shall meet. Perhaps he'll like me."

"Perhaps he won't," said Aurora, laughing. "I wonder whether you've got his favourite room."

"Has he a favourite room? I'll secure it, if I have to bribe the landlord with my last sovereign. But tell me, when do you expect him?"

"By the very next train," said Aurora, "and it is just due. You must go, really."

"Must I? Not until you tell me what time to-day I shall see you again. I have a thousand things to say to you."

"You are very troublesome," said Aurora. "Do you know where the trout-stream crosses the road to the village? There is a path on the left which is a favourite walk of mine at about four o'clock."

"I'll carefully avoid it," said Paul, who was quite in high spirits at the success of his brief interview, and at the prospect of a little fun with Hogmire. "Good-bye, my child: love to the uncle."

Away went Veryan, gaily flourishing his stick, and wishing he had brought his dogs with him. As he walked rapidly down the avenue, he perceived that a train had just arrived at the station, and

landed two or three passengers. One of them was Hogmire: no mistaking the short squat figure, or the dingy red beard. They passed each other at the entrance gate. The attorney was carrying a black bag, and gave Paul a keen suspicious glance of his porcine eyes.

I don't know whether he went so far as to identify Paul as the lover of the niece whom he admired; but he was an astute individual, this lawyer, and he remembered having seen our hero before, and he had been collecting evidence which went to show Miss Elmore had been committing flirtation with somebody not unlike Paul Veryan. So he was not particularly pleased to encounter this stranger at the gateway of the Azure Academy.

However, he was awfully amiable to the young lady, delinquent though he

thought her, being determined to bide his time, and await the inevitable discovery. He had brought her some affectionate avuncular gifts in that black bag of his—a trifle from Morel's in the shape of a *pâté de foies gras* and a bottle of curaçoa, and a pair of delicate earrings that he had bought in Paris. Aurora did not object to finery, but I think she rather preferred the pie and the *liqueur*. She was built on a grand scale, like Queen Penthesilea, and wanted plentiful nutriment.

And on this occasion, being full of happiness and adventure, and ready for anything that might happen, she was rather hard upon her uncle. She was very much obliged, of course; but she did not think that was the season for Perigord pies, and she much preferred maraschino to curaçoa, and she had quite given up wearing earrings as a barbarous custom. 'Tis a fact

that once, when she had a very pretty pair of earrings in her delicate little ears, Paul had uncourteously remarked that he would just as soon see a ring through a lady's nose; whereupon she had altogether given up that style of ornament.

As there was plenty of work to do at the Azure Academy, Hogmire had but a brief interview with his niece; then he went off to his quarters in the village, arranging to return and spend the evening. Paul Veryan, meanwhile, after having wandered for an hour about the vicinage, had settled down to smoke and talk with Eeles. The inn was a type not infrequent in the home counties, especially Surrey: it bore the sign of The Angler's Rest, for the neighbouring trout-stream was famous: and behind it there were an old-fashioned garden and bowling-green, pleasantly indolent places. Hither came Paul and his companion, and

were quietly puffing the calumet of calm, when they heard an altercation between Hogmire and the landlord.

The lawyer was a good customer. He came down pretty often to look after that tiresome troublesome niece of his. There was one bed-room which specially arrided him—a sunny chamber with southern aspect—and to his disgust he found it pre-occupied. Being a most unreasonable personage, he blamed the landlord for not having known by instinct that he was coming down: and mine host, though the most humble of men, and particularly anxious to oblige so good a customer, could not quite understand this.

“Well,” said Hogmire, “it is a great nuisance, but I suppose I must bear it. I shall go and smoke on the bowling-green. Bring me a glass of port wine.”

“You’ll find some gentlemen out there,” said the landlord.

The curious trio got on well enough together, though of course Hogmire had his suspicions about Paul. But, desiring to find out all he could, he resolved to make himself agreeable ; and, not to do him injustice, he could make himself agreeable when he liked. He had travelled a good deal, and had in some respects profited by his travel. His chief fault was that, having attained the position which he occupied by remarkable legal capacity, his favourite topic of conversation was law. I notice this very often with lawyers and mathematicians. Mathematical science is to the physical world what legal science is to the social world ; both are immensely ingenious and important, but neither is particularly amusing ; and I do not care for conversations on either the integral calculus or the law of contingent remainders.

However, Hogmire was singularly agree-

able this summer morning, and offered each of his companions a choice cigar from a superb case given him by an admiring client, and arranged with Paul that they should dine together. Eeles declined.

"No," he said, "dinner is a meal I don't often eat. Breakfast I like, and supper I adore; but between the two I content myself with a bit of bread and cheese, or cold bacon and a raw onion, or a handful of chestnuts, or a few apples. I like to begin the day with a glorious feed, and to end it in like manner. When one is thoroughly tired out, to sit by a rare wood fire, and wash down some cold beef or a brace of birds with plenty of strong home-brewed ale, is my idea of enjoyment."

"Your idea is not a bad one," said Paul; "but it is not everybody who can realize and enjoy it."

"No," answered Eeles, "that is quite

true. It suits me. I have lived alone all my life, and I shall always live alone. I am very fond of the human race, but I could not attach myself to a single individual. I daresay I shall shock you by saying that I think the maddest thing a man can do is to get married and have children. I began life as an orphan, without brothers and sisters—of course my uncles and aunts cut me dead—and with just enough money to live upon in the way I like.”

“What is the way you like?” asked Hogmire.

“What I have been doing these last five and thirty years. I live at village inns, and walk about England. If people condescend to talk to me, I talk to them ; if they don’t, I don’t grieve. I do a little fishing occasionally, when I’m in an idle humour ; but for the most part I wander about, sometimes staying a day or two in any place like this,

that I happen to like, sometimes walking twenty or thirty miles a day for weeks together."

"Not an unpleasant life," said Paul.

"Not a very useful one," remarked Hogmire.

"You are both right and both wrong," said Eeles. "The life is pleasant when you have good weather, good health; but suppose you're out of spirits, with a cold in the head or a touch of rheumatism, and a nasty drizzling rain or a sharp east wind, and you begin to wish you had a cosy little corner of your own to nestle in."

"With a cosy little wife to make it snug," said Paul.

"You're right, sir. I dream of that sort of thing now that it is years too late, and that any girl I could have hoped to marry is under the turf, or the mother of some other man's children. But you

know," he said, addressing Hogmire, "I am not going to admit that I'm no use in the world. You see, I'm a warning."

"A warning!" said the lawyer.

"Yes. When you two young gentlemen look at me, and see how I'm wasting my life, and preparing for myself an unhappy rheumatic old age, you'll recollect your own duty to yourselves and the world, and get married as soon as possible."

"Don't you think I look very much married already?" asked Paul.

"Well, I can't say I do. There are symptoms of bachelorship about you. But there is another way in which I hope to be of some use to the world—I am keeping an account of my wanderings, which I shall leave behind me. I have seen strange people and known strange things. It will make a curious book, if it should ever get into print."

"I hope," said Hogmire, "you have taken precautions to preserve it. Such a record of a life like yours ought to be very interesting."

"It is safe enough," he rejoined. "And, to tell you the truth, I don't think anybody will be much the worse for reading it. One thing is very odd: I have met lots of people in my wanderings once, and once only—but if I meet a man twice, I am sure to meet him again."

"Do you know the Ottermoor?" asked Paul.

The question was not answered, for there suddenly came in some loungers of the neighbourhood to play bowls: and Eeles, being an enthusiastic lover of that lazy game, went off to join them. Hogmire also sauntered away to look on: next to lotos-eating (if it does not actually surpass that practice) looking on

at a game of bowls during a sultry summer afternoon is about the most indolent thing imaginable.

Paul however did not care for bowls : so he announced his intention of taking a long walk in the direction of a pleasant height of the Surrey hills which was visible in the distance.

“How far off do you think it is?” he said to Eeles.

But that worthy was far too occupied to reply ; and the landlord volunteered a guess that it was about eight miles.

“Well,” said Paul, “if I start at once, and walk at a pretty good pace, I can manage to be back by dinner time.”

He and Hogmire were to dine together at six—the uncle intending to go up to the Academy at seven, and spend a pleasant evening with his niece.

“You’ll find it hot work this afternoon,”

said the lawyer. "Better stay here and play bowls."

Clearly enough, Paul's announcement of his intended walk was meant to mislead Hogmire. Did it have that effect? I think not. The attorney argued within himself that the young man did not seem to be entirely a lunatic, and that therefore it was highly improbable he would walk sixteen or more miles, at the rate of at least four miles an hour, on a scorching summer afternoon. When our hero had started, the astute Hogmire went upstairs, took from his bag an opera-glass, and planted himself at a window which commanded a long stretch of the road towards the hill. Somewhat to his surprise, Paul Veryan walked along the hot white road as if he were walking for a wager.

"He *is* a lunatic, after all," said Hogmire.

But he watched a little longer, and suddenly perceived that Paul, having reached a grassy knoll under a big oak-tree, had seated himself, and was lighting a cigar. Hogmire's was a capital glass, and he could observe that our hero, as he lay in the shade, pulled a note-book out of his pocket, and commenced writing furiously.

"Well," said the lawyer to himself, "he *is* a lunatic, but not of the sort he wanted me to think. There's method in his madness.. He's in love with somebody, I can see; and as I expect Aurora is in love with somebody, and as he is down here and visiting somebody in the Academy, I'm afraid there is no getting out of the obvious inference. What am I to do? It's a grave mistake of the law that

young women are allowed their own way as soon as they are of age. I should like to put Miss Aurora under lock and key until that long-legged jackanapes was out of the way."

Did you ever notice what complete contempt short men have for the tall fellows whom Providence occasionally puts in their way?

While Eeles and the others were playing bowls, Hogmire remained at his post of observation, alternately puffing his cigar and watching Veryan through his opera-glass. Paul, poor fellow, had no idea he was watched. He smoked a little; then he wrote—I don't know what, but no doubt it was nonsense; then he jumped up and walked about, and apostrophized the elements, and the sky, and especially that eastern part of it wherein Aurora was born. Then, finding himself uncom-

monly hot, he threw off his coat, and next his waistcoat, and took to smoking and scribbling and apostrophizing in his shirt-sleeves. It is, I suspect, the wisest thing to do, when you are poetical or amorous in the heat of summer. I cannot describe all that Paul did. Hogmire watched him all the while—and I hope he was edified. By-and-by, the air growing cooler, our hero resumed his habiliments, struck out of the road across some fields, and was soon out of the ken of Hogmire's glass among the hedges. The worthy attorney was savage.

“Confound it, where's the fellow gone, I wonder?”

Hogmire shut up his glass with so fierce a crash that he cracked one of the lenses—and has never been able to get it replaced to this day—and then walked off with a wild idea of being fortunate enough

to encounter Paul somewhere or other. Being interested in the lovers, I am happy to say that the uncle failed to do so.

But Paul met Aurora by that trout-stream at four o'clock. It was a wide shallow rivulet, in whose clear waters you could see the fish enjoying their element as no other creatures except birds seem to enjoy their conditions of existence. The walk by its side was sinuous and shady; the big trees were bird-haunted; the air was full of larks, whose song seemed to surround the lovers. They had a very pleasant stroll, but it was neither long nor sentimental. For, you see, they had had certain colloquies in London; and they were not a boy and a girl, but a couple of marriageable people; and Paul Veryan was in earnest; and Aurora Elmore was beset with difficulties, academic and avuncular.

"I'll tell you what," quoth Paul, after they had talked for some time, "I won't waste any more time. I'll go to town by the next train, and see about the license, and all that stuff: you come up by the first train on Saturday, and I'll meet you at Waterloo, and we'll go and commit matrimony in the quietest manner possible."

"I shall make eternal enemies of at least six of my intimate friends whom I have promised to have as my bridesmaids when the great event occurs."

"To say nothing of Hogmire," said Paul. "Well, the next up-train is at half-past five, so you will be able to see me off. I wonder how long Hogmire will wait dinner for me. I wonder whether the landlord will think I want to swindle him, and open my bag under the impression that it is full of rubbish."

“O, you must do something about the landlord.”

“I’ll telegraph to him as soon as I reach town. Don’t worry yourself about trifles. I’ll manage everything.”

Miss Elmore walked with Paul to the station, and then returned home to dine. Her uncle was late in his visit that evening, and when he arrived was confoundedly cross. He had been wandering in every direction but the right in order to encounter Paul Veryan, and had completely failed. He had made himself very hot thereby, and had reached the village inn late for dinner. He had waited twenty minutes longer for Paul, and had then sat down to overdone trout, and a steak which no amount of broiling could make tender. The sherry had been fiery, and the port tasted more of the hedges than the butler. Altogether, Hogmire, though amiable for

an attorney, could hardly be expected to command his temper under vexations that would provoke an angel.

However, when he had drunk a few glasses of Assmannshauser—which wine, as he liked it himself, and it agreed with his niece, he was in the habit of sending to that young lady—he began to grow more amiable. I think it has been remarked that, among other originalities of the Azure Academy, billiards were permissible. Aurora and her uncle adjourned to the hall, where, being joined by Agnes Brabazon and another young lady, they played a game at pool. So gaily did Hogmire flirt with Miss Brabazon that, when the gong sounded for evening prayers, and the party separated, she whispered to Aurora :

“What a nice old ogre he is ! I almost wish he was *my* uncle.”

Aurora, when she reached her solitary chamber, had a good deal to think about. She had engaged to marry Paul Vervan, and that within a few days : and she was neither sorry nor afraid, since she loved and believed in him. At the same time, she had to think of Miss Bettesworth, her employer and friend ; of little Agnes, whom she had protected ; of her uncle, who had protected her, and who, she knew, would be angry beyond measure. To say a word to him on the subject would, she knew, be dangerous : though he could not prevent her carrying out her design, he would do all within his power to annoy her. After much meditation Aurora determined that she would acquaint Miss Bettesworth with her intention, but not until Friday evening, so that the old lady might have no opportunity of spreading the intelligence.

When Hogmire returned to his inn, he

found the landlord wondering what had become of Paul, and telling Eeles a string of remarkable stories of gentlemen who had stayed at the various inns he had kept, and mysteriously disappeared under various circumstances—for the most part without paying their bills.

“This is another case of the same sort,” sneered Hogmire. “You give this young fellow the best room in your house, to the extreme inconvenience of a good customer, and now he has gone off, and left you a bag filled with rubbish.”

“Well, sir,” said the landlord, “if there’s nothing else, the bag’s worth more than what he had in the house.”

“Ah, very likely he saw a detective about here, and went off at once.”

Just then was brought in Paul Veryan’s telegram, announcing that he had been obliged to leave suddenly, and that his

servant would come down next day to pay his bill, and so forth.

Paul was rehabilitated in the landlord's mind. Hogmire was puzzled, and resolved to talk to the servant—if he came.

CHAPTER III.

THE HONEYMOON.

*"Quarta quinta qualis,
Tota luna talis."*

I WONDER whether this old rhyme, prophetic of the weather in each successive moon, is in any degree true of the honeymoon. I wonder whether by the fourth or fifth day people can pretty well guess how the remainder of the poetic month will pass.

One hears different opinions as to the best way of passing this melilotophagous period. It must be rather a risk to select some scene of lonely charm, when the bridegroom and his bride have no

special resources of their own, and prefer Offenbach's music to the nightingale's, and like gossip better than literature. There is a story of some happy man who took his wife away to a divine lake, solitary as that by which Sir Launcelot was found a baby. She was a dear little woman; but she couldn't help yawning in the long mornings, and sneezing when her husband smoked a cigar in the moonlight. There wasn't a novel within twenty miles, and the country folk talked a dialect of which she could not understand a syllable. At length one day she took heart of grace, and said—

“Charlie dear, shouldn't you be glad if a friend were to drop in?”

“By Jove,” he replied, “I'd be thankful for an enemy!”

And, being a man of promptitude and energy, he caused everything to be at once

packed, and in a few hours they were on the way to Paris. Let us hope he met his enemy.

It is easy to perceive numerous causes of peril in the long duet of the honeymoon. If Mrs. Malaprop is right, and 'tis safest in matrimony to begin with a little aversion, at any rate there should be contrivances whereby that aversion may be prevented from taking an active form. And it is quite conceivable that Romeo and Juliet would have frightfully bored each other, if the course of true love had run smooth, and they had been compelled to pass the first month of marriage alone on a small island of the Lago di Garda.

Paul, however, thought that he and Aurora could run the risk. He knew a quiet little inn at a little town on the verge of the Ottermoor—a dear little dreary picturesque iniquitous town which lived

chiefly on its elections in the days before Disraeli—and he determined at first to go thither. He had little to do in London—just the license to get, and his secretaryship to resign, and so forth—and he got everything easily settled by the appointed morning. As to Aurora, she amazed Miss Bettesworth with the announcement of her design, and packed up her paraphernalia, and kept tryst to the moment. The wary Hogmire had got no information from Denis O'Brien, when that worthy came down to pay Paul's bill. It is difficult to pump an Irishman, especially when he doesn't know anything to tell you. Denis gave free way to his inventive faculty, and told the lawyer that his master had been called away to fight a duel, and was now in bed with a bullet in his ribs. Of course this charming fiction made Hogmire only the more suspicious.

But he was completely baffled. Paul did

not return, that was certain. Aurora played the part of infantine innocence to perfection. On Friday he had to go back to his business in town, little suspecting that by the same time next day, his niece, a married woman, would be speeding by express to a remote region of England. But that very thing happened, notwithstanding; and on Sunday morning the "happy couple" opened their eyes in the best bed-chamber of the Blue Lion at Ivyford, a pleasant bow-windowed room overlooking a rapid reach of the Otter. That wild stream had sung them to sleep: now, at the quiet dawn of Sabbath, it awoke them with its fresh free melody. Paul threw the window wide, and looked out delightedly upon the sparkling current, which leaped in the sunlight through a one-arched bridge on which maiden-hair fern grew profusely.

"We'll breakfast," said Paul, gaily, "and

then I'll write to Lord Latimer, and then we'll go to church."

Lord Latimer was actually the sole person to whom Paul Veryan communicated his whereabouts. The Earl had spoken of a commission to be executed in reference to the Recluse of the Ottermoor, and there would now be an opportunity of performing it, if requisite. When his lordship received that letter, he laughed pleasantly.

"I like that boy," he said to himself, putting the epistle into a private drawer of his cabinet. "He's a regular young Quixote. He throws away two thousand a year, and goes and gets married on the strength of it. I wonder what Mrs. Veryan is like—a mere child, I have no doubt. I'll send her a wedding-present to-morrow."

The Earl more than kept his word. He selected a charming set of pearls and turquoises for the lady—and to Paul himself he

caused Fortnum's people to forward a huge hamper of comestibles, and had a case of wine packed for him from his own cellar.

"I know those country inns," wrote the Earl. "I've tried them all over England. When the mutton's tough, open a tin of potted game. When the sherry's fiery, try some of my 'old Clo'—Rothschild has none better. If you and Mrs. Veryan eat and drink poison, you'll quarrel before the honeymoon is over. Temper depends on digestion. Love likes luxuries."

So wrote the Earl: and the homely landlady of the Blue Lion—Ivyford was a "blue" town—thought her guests must be very great people indeed when the big cases came down. She, chief gossip of the town, talked over the matter with her intimates, and they all agreed that Mr. Veryan meant to be a candidate for the representation of Ivyford in Parliament.

I don't think Paul and Aurora were disappointed in their honeymoon, or got particularly tired of each other. The river Otter is at Ivyford a narrow rapid stream, at intervals transforming itself into a tolerable waterfall. Such foliage as grows upon its steep banks, and glorifies every curve of its channel, I have not seen elsewhere. It is a river very dear to the trout-fisher and the artist: and, during Paul's stay at the Blue Lion, he made the acquaintance of several members of these two Bohemian fraternities. Early in the morning they used to start on their campaign—the angler to spring from boulder to boulder, tempting the fish with his fly—the sketcher to settle calmly down for the day on a camp-stool, under a huge green umbrella—while the lovers rambled indolently through that divine neighbourhood, and by-and-by discovered some perfect nook wherein to talk

the ineffable nonsense which is the raw material of the greater part of poetry.

Is it any use in the world to attempt to report the conversation of these two foolish folk? Not much, I fancy. The greatest of all poets has been before me in such matters: who is to emulate the passionate talk of Romeo and Juliet, the easy love-chaff of Lorenzo and Jessica?

"Are you sure you love me?" Aurora would ask, as they lay beneath a leafy canopy in the calm summer afternoon. "Did you never love anybody else?"

"Never!" of course he would say, and I think it was true enough, though he reflected remorsefully now and then upon his folly with the Dezii. True enough: since these minor "elective affinities" are merely preliminaries to the mighty magnetism which comes at last, and draws two human beings together, soul and body, till the end of time.

As to these "elective affinities," our Aurora had her share. What nice girl has not? The world is full of its attractions and repulsions. Aurora, you know, had been much admired by boys: she walked haughtily through the world, and had a fine commanding resolute way with her, which is very attractive to the young gentleman just entering on existence. He is full of enterprise; experience has not tested his capacity; he likes to drive tandem, to ride the biggest horse he can find, to show himself fierce and brave. Naturally, therefore, he delights in the thought of taming a "fine creature" whom everybody admires. Happily for him, the fine creature invariably declines: otherwise would his fate be miserable beyond expression.

But Aurora, who might have worn in her bosom a sprig of that odorous species of artemisia which is known as boys'-love,

and which, according to the Greeks, produced amorous precocity, had quickly recognised her master, and had found in that recognition complete delight. She had never met her equal among women, nor often among men: now she had found one whom she knew to be stronger than herself, yet who in every part of his character had need of her. We have all, as the French adage puts it, the defects of our virtues. A man of great intellectual rapidity is apt to move too fast, and make others think him shallow: a man of intense capacity for sensuous enjoyment is apt to spoil himself by the indulgence of hours too idle, of delights too gross. One great function of the ideal woman is to diminish these evil results. Intense lights cast dark shadows, which should melt into the moonlight of love.

Paul Veryan's luck was odd and vacil-

lating, as I told you in my first chapter. Now that result of the combination of character and circumstance which is called luck is a very real and serious thing. Aurora was lucky. Consequently Paul's luck changed on the very day they two became one.

Paul (again *vide* Chapter I.), had an intellect well suited for work purely spontaneous. Pegasus does not go well in harness. But it was a question of double harness now: and Aurora was a mistress of method, a paragon of industry, a marvel of suggestion, ready to serve her husband as secretary, able to gently and quietly edit him.

Paul was of temperament sanguine yet insouciant. Aurora had a curb for the one and a spur for the other. She would not let him be sanguine without reason, and he found in her love a cure for his indifference—a good reason for fighting the battle of life more manfully than ever before.

As to Paul's temper—well, love set that right. He has been accurately described as a man whom you must either love or hate. Aurora *loved* him ; and, if he ever did show her the keen edge of that bitter temper of his, I suspect she scolded him sharply. I hope she did.

There they sit, you see, on a great rock under a great tree, with the brown Otter chafing among its boulders at their feet. Paul has "shied" a stick into the water, and Growl and Wag have plunged in after it. Their wild bark has frightened a kingfisher, who suddenly flashes across the stream as if a fragment of rainbow had been fledged for flight.

"It is very jolly here," quoth Paul. "Life's a halcyon dream."

"Well," said Aurora, "to me the life before this seems far more like a dream. I can hardly believe it existed at all. Was

there really a time when I did not know *you*, Paul? Was there really a time when I had not even seen you, and now I am a part of you?"

"You were waiting for me, child," said Paul.

"Yes, but you did not know it, and I did not know it—and suppose either of us had made a mistake, and married somebody else. We should never have known what happiness is: at least I shouldn't, Paul."

"Providence didn't design to treat us so badly, little girl," said Paul. "You'd have turned Manichæan, if it had. You were taught all about the Manichæans at school, weren't you? Mr. Swinburne is one of them."

"I don't know anything about them, and I don't want to know. But I am quite satisfied with things as they are, and I pity people who have never learnt what happi-

ness means. I wonder how I could ever have lived without it."

"There are some plants that never flower," said Paul. "You were a long time bursting into blossom, but now that you've done it I think you're a very fair specimen, both for beauty and fragrance. By Jove, who's that fellow? I've seen him before somewhere."

Paul's erotic poetry was abruptly stopped by the dogs barking fiercely at a stranger who was crossing the stream at some stepping-stones.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SPY.

"Ille dolis instructus et arte Pelasga."

WHEN a man is perfectly happy, it is not pleasant to be recalled to the sordid level at which humanity exists. Sir Robert Clifton assures me that there is something more exhilarating than Champagne in the æther drunk by an aéronaut high up in a balloon; and I am quite prepared to believe the member for Nottingham's testimony on this point, though I cannot accept his conclusion from his balloon experiences that the world is perfectly flat. Perhaps, if I went up five miles or so myself, I should agree with him; for the abstract

arguments of the astronomers are beyond ordinary intellects; and there is a tendency among common-place people to infer that what looks flat is flat. Now, if one were high in a balloon, drinking the divine æther of the aerial altitude, and surveying with Olympian serenity the wide-strewn cities far below, looking like towns upon a map, and wondering what love and madness, hatred and murder, might be at work in their precincts, it would be a vile trick of fortune, a ridiculous bathos, if the gaseous machine were sheer to descend, depositing the ambitious voyagers in some fetid pool. 'Tis what happens to us all in our time. It happened to Paul now.

The melilunatics strolled back to the Blue Lion soon after. That stranger who had crossed the stepping-stones, and who had awakened the ire of Growl and Wag—sage dogs, with intuitive knowledge of

character—had met Paul's eye somewhere before. He could not remember where, but the fellow had made an unpleasant impression upon him. There's a kind of unconscious photographic memory; you may meet, years after, the dentist who has wrenched out a tooth, or the lawyer who has persecuted you for money, and his face shall chill your nerves, though you cannot recollect anything about him. This man perplexed Paul Veryan; knocked the poetry out of him; sent him home to the Blue Lion in moody silence, longing for bitter ale. He was an eminently respectable-looking stranger, with almost too black a coat and too shiny a hat for a lazy loungeur in the valley of the Otter. Paul, though he knew it was most unreasonable, could not help speculating as to where he had seen him, and what brought him there. Aurora, being the wisest little woman in the world,

deemed it inadvisable to take any notice of her husband's moodiness, and trusted that the coming tankard of Bass would cure him.

Home to the quiet little inn they came, and ascended to their rooms, and Paul rang for his refresher. Then his eye was caught by an envelop on the table, and he opened it, and behold it was his bill. A very few pounds for a very few days: I don't know how many, and I am quite sure Paul didn't: but he was a little puzzled to know why the honest homely landlady had thought it necessary to remind him of his indebtedness.

"Got a bill to make up, I suppose," thought Paul: "old Becker always had, in the days when I paid him at such irregular intervals. Well, I'll go down to the bar, and help the old lady in her trouble."

In the bar was the respectable stranger, smoking a cigar of a doubtful appearance.

He tried to get into conversation with Paul, who was not at all civil to him, being absurdly savage because he could not remember where he had seen him before.

"Beautiful neighbourhood this, sir," said the Respectable.

"Very," quoth Paul.

"Pleasanter than London a good deal, sir."

"Never was there," said Paul, "so can't say."

"Dear me: never in London! I suppose you live in these parts," persisted the Respectable.

"Very much so," said Paul, and emerged into the open air, nearly tumbling over Joe, the factotum of the Blue Lion. Paul being over six feet, while Joe was very little above four, it was not remarkable that my hero could not always see the ostler.

Who was an excellent fellow, red-headed, bull-necked, almost as broad as he was

high, and the best wrestler in the two great wrestling counties. Short and wide, you could move Joe from his base about as easily as one of the Thames Embankment piers. But there was never a better-tempered fellow, and he used his huge strength most mildly. Paul liked him, for his talk was racy, and he could tell Homeric stories of the ancient contests of the champions of the shires.

"Fine day, Joe," said Paul, as he passed on towards the bridge.

"Main fine, your honour. Queer card that, inside. Heard him talking about your honour to the missus."

"About *me*!"

"Yes," replied Joe, "and he'd asked me lots of questions about you before."

"Well, but what did he say about me?" asked Vervan impatiently.

"I couldn't be quite sure what it was he

said, but I think he told the missus he knew something about you, and she'd better look after her money, and 'twas very doubtful whether you was married to your good lady."

Imagine Paul Vryan's rage. His first impulse was to go at once and lay hands on this astounding libeller. But it occurred to him that a row in his honeymoon would be hardly agreeable to Aurora, and that it would be just as well to wait and see whether time revealed the man's purpose.

"I've no enemies," soliloquized Paul. Yet at the same time he thought of that mysterious midnight dagger-thrust, and changed the form of his thought into wonder *why* he should have any enemies.

I have often felt similar wonder. But every man who has a definite character has also enemies.

"Well, Joe," he said, "if you hear any

more of the fellow's talk, come and tell me. I won't punch his head—yet.”

“Who was this fellow?” thought Paul, as he leaned over the lichen-stained parapet of the immemorial bridge, and watched the dark trout leap at the cinnamon-fly in a pellucid pool below. Dear old bridge! I can remember the flavour of some strawberries I ate there thirty good years ago, when the mail-coach stopped to change horses at the Blue Lion, and my father bought a basket for his boy. There are no four-horse mails now, and the strawberries (even though Westbrook grows them) have not half the flavour, and Laërtes is dead, and Odysseus is a trifle weary.

“Who was this fellow?” thought Paul.

Of course the astute reader has already guessed, and guessed aright. It was that dapper furtive personage who called himself

"Smith," and whose movements had singularly puzzled Denis O'Brien. Paul, we know, had caught sight of him one night after the Opera, when there was a supper at the Dezii's. And now we arrive at two questions. Who was "Smith," that he should haunt and libel Paul? How in the world did he discover where Paul was to be found?

There are men who, like the mole, work underground. They like to astonish their friends and their enemies by bringing matters to an issue in a sudden unexpected way. Of such men the attorney Hogmire was a typical example. His subterranean style of procedure had been singularly successful, both in and out of his profession. And he had drilled a corps of clerks to do this sort of work for him—of which corps "Smith" was the ablest member.

Hogmire was a revengeful man. For two

reasons, perhaps three, the pursuer of revenge is to be pitied. First, revenge is invariably disproportionate to the offence which arouses it: revengeful men are moved to utter wrath by trifles, and would have no vengeance commensurate to a great indignity. Next, time itself in all cases brings the appropriate revenge, as Shakespeare knew: every action carries within itself the germ of its own reward or punishment, and the man who does a base deed will most assuredly be basely treated. Last of all, revenge is followed by remorse: he who achieves the one will not escape the other.

Hogmire was revengeful; and being intensely annoyed that his niece should fall in love and marry without his permission, he naturally desired to punish her for the atrocity. This desire was not unknown to his *fidus Achates*, his *ame damnée*, "Smith." That worthy worked his subtle wits to dis-

cover in what way he could carry into effect his master's wishes ; but, as Paul and Aurora had disappeared without leaving any trace behind them, there seemed slight chance of his success. However, chance often favours the wicked ; and in the present instance the furtive "Smith" happened to be going along Piccadilly upon some other business—to serve a writ, likely enough. There are gentlemen to whom such documents are not unknown in the Jermyn Street district. "Smith" always saw everything, at least of a sort ; he might miss a beautiful woman or a fine sunset, but he noted dresses and equipages, policemen and scamps, all that was sordid, all that was suspicious. He saw a big case being lifted upon a cart at Fortnum's corner ; and his keen cunning eyes caught the address of "*Veryan, Ivyford.*"

This accident accounted for his crossing

Paul's path. He came down to the delicious little town on the Otter, with instructions to do anything malicious which might occur to him, and await further orders.

We have seen how he fulfilled his instructions.

CHAPTER V.

IN A WILD LAND.

“’Tis twenty thousand miles from anywhere.”

REAL happiness dwells in a fortress of its own. Its home is a maiden land. No vile foot ever treads its virgin turf, watered by the sky from the day of the first rainbow. As Paul and Aurora sat at breakfast next morning, with windows open to the river Otter, they were wholly unaffected by the presence of the human reptile below. Paul had forgotten him, in the light of those darling eyes; forgotten the existence of the mischief-maker, who had hitherto caused him only a little perplexity and indignation and laughter. As

to Aurora, she knew nothing of his existence: and, if she had, what matter? Her world had a limit, and that limit was Paul Veryan. Unless a thing or a being caused pleasure or annoyance to her husband, in nowise could Aurora be thereby affected.

Meanwhile the human reptile, the furtive "Smith," was thinking much of the lady and gentleman above stairs. A letter had arrived for Paul Veryan, Esquire; it was a big letter, with many stamps, and a seal of imposing appearance; and the landlady remarked that it was the first letter the gentleman had received since he came to the Blue Lion. "Smith," as he examined those stately quarterings on the seal, and read the knightly motto, "*Suis prest*," wished his particular Squeers had taught him heraldry. He was excellent at the rule of three and the vulgarest of fractions, but he did not know a wyvern from

a falcon. His education, as Cuvier remarked of a greater personage in the same line of business, had been neglected.

"Smith" examined the exterior of this bulky letter, and made mental memoranda of its seal and post-mark (*Oceanborough*) and external aspect, and then handed it to the pretty waitress, who carried it upstairs. "Smith" would gladly have gone up to listen at the door, but couldn't do it without detection.

"By Jove, my child," said Paul, when he saw the package, "a letter from Lord Latimer. I told you there was something he wanted me to do for him. I hope he wants me to do it at once."

"I thought you were happy here with me," said Aurora, reproachfully.

"So I am, perfectly, you darling. But you know how kind the Earl has been to us: and I'm sure you'll say I ought to be glad to do anything for him."

But a loving little bride, in the heart of the honeymoon, is not likely to admit that her husband ought to do anything for anybody in the world except herself: so I fancy Aurora was a very little bit sulky that morning. Thus ran the Earl's letter:—

“Caprice: Sunday.

“MY DEAR VERYAN,

“You are passing happy days, and will not thank me for interrupting their happiness. It was rash of you to tell me of that mysterious old man on the Ottermoor, and incite me, who hate duties, to do a duty. Punishment falls on you: I ask you, in the midst of your honeymoon, to go and see this old man, and to deliver to him the packet which I enclose. What may follow thereon, I cannot guess.

“I know you will do this, though it comes on you at a time so inopportune. So I won't say, Don't if you don't like.

"Give my love to your wife : I know she is charming : I hope some day you will let me tell her so. I daresay Lucy would send you a kind message, but she is always with that fellow Thorold, and has no time to talk to me. Thorold is a capital fellow, as men go in these days. But what am I to do without Lucy ? A feminine secretary is a necessity for me. I suppose I must marry again. There are plenty of pretty children whose sordid mothers would force them into my arms, if I extended them.

"But I am not a cynic, as you know, Mr. Paul Veryan. And I am very much in love with your wife, though I have never seen her. Still, I don't expect her to forgive me for interfering with her arrangements : women don't.

"LATIMER."

Thus ran the letter. Paul explained to Aurora its purport.

"Is it far from here, darling? Can't I go with you?" she asked.

"It is only ten or twelve miles from here, but over very difficult ground," said Paul. "And you see, as this mysterious old friend of mine may have some reply to make to Lord Latimer, I may be detained a night. One never can tell."

"I wish you would take some one with you," said Aurora.

"A capital idea, my child: you're a suggestive little person. I'll take Joe, the ostler here, if Mrs Chubb can spare him, and I daresay he'll be able to show me a shorter way than I could find myself."

So it was arranged that they should start the next morning, Paul Veryan and Joe. "Smith," meanwhile, had noticed that there was some movement astir, and had done all he could in the way of listening and of quiet inquiry, and had formed a theory of his

own, which was about as far from the truth as most theories are. However, "Smith" got an important ally in the course of that evening—an ally who arrived unexpectedly, and quite late at night, and who shut himself up in a private room, with some mutton chops and a bottle of port. What in the world brought Hogmire suddenly to Ivyford? Something he had heard, doubtless. An astute individual was Hogmire, with an ear like that of Dionysius: and somehow or other he always contrived to concentrate the gossip and scandal of the world into a form useful to himself. I do not object to the Hogmire style of man: if there are frail flies there must also be crafty spiders.

Sitting over his port wine, he received from the trusty "Smith" an account of all that he had done. He did not excite his myrmidon with any particular eulogy. There was some cleverness, doubtless, in

“Smith’s” suggestions that Veryan would never pay his bill, and that the lady known as Mrs. Veryan was no better than she should be; but as Paul had paid his bill with laudable promptitude, Hogmire saw that any reflexion on the character of the lady would be entirely thrown away. So he came to the reluctant conclusion that as yet he had not caused Paul any particular annoyance.

“Better luck to-morrow,” he thought to himself, as he turned in to sleep off his port wine.

Early next morning—soon after sunrise indeed—Joe the ostler threw some pebbles at Paul’s chamber-window. And our hero dressed, and gave his wife a farewell kiss amid her drowsiness, and started to seek the Recluse.

Three hours later Aurora descended—to breakfast alone for the first time since her

marriage. It made the child somewhat melancholy. Perchance she had some instinctive intuitive depression caused by the unknown presence of Hogmire in the house. Any way, she didn't enjoy her breakfast; though the morning was delicious; though the Otter sang cheerily outside her open window; though Grawl and Wag did their best, like chivalrous dogs, to console her for their master's absence.

Hogmire kept close in his room, watching at the window himself, with "Smith" to assist him outside. Paul's disappearance before they were awake rather puzzled them. They had no idea he was gone, and Hogmire did not venture to show himself. Mrs. Veryan, having breakfasted, came down stairs with her dogs, and strolled lazily along the bank of the Otter; Hogmire and "Smith" meanwhile imagining that her husband had stayed behind to smoke a cigar,

or to write letters, or something of the kind. So they watched an empty room for an hour or so, and were only enlightened by accident at last.

There drove to the door a bagman—a person travelling to sell grocery or drapery. You know the sort of man; a mixture of geniality and business, hot brandy-and-water and bills at three months. “Where’s Joe?” was his first inquiry; people of this class find it necessary to look after their horses, and are always on confidential terms with ostlers. Mr. Chubb had to inform him that Joe was gone away for a day with a gentleman who was staying in the house. “Smith,” keenest of listeners, heard this, and at once reported it to his employer, who lay perdu upstairs. I fear the worthy Hogmire indulged in execration.

“Find out what he is gone for, if you

can," he said to his clerk ; " at any rate find out which way they are gone."

"Smith" was not very successful. Mrs. Chubb, having been paid her bill with promptitude, was not prejudiced in favour of the person who had insinuated the probability of her not being paid at all. Moreover, she had not the remotest idea of what was Paul's errand, or whither he had gone. She replied with a certain amount of scorn and indignation to the crafty question of the cunning clerk.

"I daresay the gentleman is fishing somewhere up the Otter," she said, with a toss of her handsome head. Mrs. Chubb was fat, fair, and forty, a buxom well-to-do widow, whom the majority of the Ivyford bachelors hugely admired. "Joe is a capital hand at fishing. However, if you're so much interested in the gentleman's doings,

why don't you ask the lady? She's just gone up the river with her dogs."

"Smith" was foiled, and was obliged to report himself to his master as foiled; and Hogmire, a man who detested defeat, was proportionately angry. But his campaign had only commenced. An hour later he and his clerk started from the Blue Lion, with an intimation to the landlady that they might not return till the following day.

CHAPTER VI.

EXIT.

"When dying I go forth to the unknown Powers,
Be it in the calmest time of Night's still star-watched
hours."

PAUL VERYAN and Joe the ostler strode gaily off towards the Ottermoor. It was a divine morning and a divine country. Paul liked his comrade, and I think Joe liked his. It was that sort of weather which Wordsworth indicates :

"All things that love the sun are out of doors ;
The sky rejoices in the morning's birth ;
The grass is bright with rain-drops ; on the moors
The hare is running races in her mirth."

Joe knew the region which they traversed as he knew the palm of his hand. There

was a hare's form; there was an otter's run; this was a famous trout-pool; to that marsh came the earliest woodcock; on those moorland heights plovers' eggs were a safe find. Thus our friend the ostler, who also had many strange weird stories to narrate of that wild neighbourhood. Paul, having the poet's love for that wild legend which lies at the root of all poetry, listened with great satisfaction to the ostler's inexhaustible traditions. So the three leagues or so of moorland were traversed, as it seemed, with great rapidity: and indeed it was still morning when Paul entered the old-fashioned garden, and knocked at the cottage door. It was opened by a "little maid," to use the phrase of the county.

"I thought it was the doctor," she said, when she saw Paul.

And then he learnt that his friend was ill—unable to leave his room. Even while

he spoke, the doctor from Ottermouth arrived—a grey-headed brisk abrupt man, rather of the Abernethy type.

“A friend of yours?” he said. “Ah, you are come in good time. The old gentleman is dying—of mere age, you know. His brain is as clear as ever—he wants a friend.”

“Then I may go up and see him.”

“Let me see him first,” said the doctor, and went upstairs at once. “He is glad you are here,” he said on his return. “Don’t leave him again, if you can help it. It will not be for many hours. He wants no medicine. Give him wine.”

Paul found the Recluse lying, like the marble statue of an aged knight, in his chamber above. The window was wide open, and the river Otter sang gaily over its rocks.

“You have just come in time,” said the

old man, faintly, while his eyes shone with a strange light. "I am going, at last. I am rather curious to solve the great problem."

"I have brought you a letter from Lord Latimer," said Paul.

The old man took it.

"Dear old Nugent! So he has found me out at last. I don't want to open it: I know well what it contains. Tell me, have you taken the advice I gave you?"

"O yes," said Veryan. "I am no longer a secretary, and I am a married man. Indeed, my wife is at Ivyford: we have been spending our honeymoon at the Blue Lion."

"I know it. Bring her here," he said, eagerly. "I want to see her. Can you send for her?"

"Easily," said Veryan, to whom had already occurred the idea that Aurora's

presence might conduce to the comfort of the dying Recluse. There was nobody in the house save the deaf old housekeeper and the little maid ; and everybody knows that there is no nurse in the world like a lady. Refinement and intelligence, always useful, are specially of use in the chamber of the sick.

So Paul went down and called in Joe, who had been waiting outside with the utmost patience, watching the birds and the fish and the flies that hovered above the surface of the water, and gave him some refreshment while he wrote a couple of letters. One was to Aurora, telling her that she was to start immediately under Joe's care, in any vehicle that could be obtained. The other was for Lord Latimer, to be posted at Ivyford.

"Now, Joe," he said, when he had finished writing, "are you ready to go back at

once? Have you had enough to eat and drink?"

"Quite enough. Quite ready, master. This be main fine cider."

Paul gave the ostler instructions as to what was to be done. He started rapidly homeward.

"You'll find it all right," he said, as he went off. "I'll bring the lady safe enough. We'll be here good time in the afternoon."

Paul, having refreshed himself with a tankard of the unique cider—cider better far than that which Dean Swift named as an inducement to Pope to visit him, went up to sit by the bedside of the Recluse. Naturally he asked the stereotyped question—whether he felt any better.

"Better?" said the old man. "Not in your sense of the word. I am going to pass into the other world, and I feel rather pleased at the adventure. Why not? Fear

does not become a Christian gentleman. An hour or two, and I may be treading the soil of a virgin planet. What am I to pass through first? Is there some Horror right in my way, to drive me back into the howling wilderness? I don't fear it, and I don't see why. Sunrise and sunset are equally beautiful. Birth is not terrible, and why should death be? The goddesses shouted at the birth of Apollo: why should not the gods rejoice at the death of a man who has done his work in one world, and passes on to another?"

"He is a perfect Pagan," thought Paul to himself. And then he asked the old man whether he would not like a clergyman to be sent for.

"Certainly not," he replied, emphatically. "I will see no one but yourself and your wife, and Latimer if he comes in time. You have written to him, I am sure?"

"I have."

"Then I must live till he comes. Read me something. Read me my old friend Wordsworth's ode—you know the one I mean. The book is on that shelf."

Paul found the edition of 1807, published by Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, printed (on coarse paper) by Wood and Innes, of Poppin's Court, Fleet Street, with the great poet's autograph on the fly-leaf. He read the immortal ode. The old man drank in every word thereof with delight unutterable. At its end he said,

"Thank you, Mr. Veryan. I can sleep now. Go downstairs and amuse yourself, and see about some dinner for your wife."

Paul obeyed orders, attended to the commissariat department, and then, looking over the old garden wall upon the river Otter, moralized on the curious catenation of circumstances which had brought him to be

the watcher of this old man's death-bed. The hours passed swiftly, while Paul Veryan smoked and mused: by-and-by, amid his musings, he was aroused by a sound he knew well—the sharp bark of his dog Wag-tail. He looked up—and lo, a cavalcade! Aurora enthroned in a pony-cart with her luggage—Joe leading the pony—the two dogs in a high state of delight at seeing their master again. Aurora, whom nothing ever took by surprise, and who would have looked quite as well (and not a bit better) on a throne as in a pony-cart, was very welcome to Paul at that moment.

Very welcome she seemed also to the old Recluse, whom they found awake again, while the huge mastiff Argo watched him wistfully—wondering, doubtless, why his master, not long ago so fond of living on the wild moorland, now preferred to lie in a close room all day.

"So you are come to see the old man," he said. "I am very glad, child. Kiss me: no woman has kissed me for twice the length of your life—none since she for whom I killed my best friend. It seems as if it were yesterday. What a noble fellow he looked in that gray misty morning on that Surrey heath! He died without a pang. I suppose I was right. I loved him—and I loved her—and they betrayed me. I shall know all in a few hours. Take your wife downstairs," he resumed, after a pause. "Give her some dinner, and the wine you used to like. Argo will take care of me till you return."

So Aurora and Paul dined, talking in whispers: and, when they had finished, went back to his bedside. The old man was asleep now: one hand hung over the coverlet, whiter than the well-bleached napery, and the great mastiff had his black nose close to it.

It was nearly midnight when he awoke. The full moon was high in heaven; the great procession of the stars passed on in silence, unbroken save by the musical ripple and rush of the river.

"I cannot wait for Nugent," he said. "Tell him I could not wait. I have seen them in a dream: I want to see them in reality. Give me a last kiss, child. Good-bye, Argo."

With feeble hand he patted the mastiff's head. As Aurora's lips touched his wax-white brow, he uttered a great sigh, and the soul was gone. A clock on the chimney-piece struck the hour of midnight.

Argo gave vent to a mighty howl, which seemed to call unearthly echoes from the granite walls that confine the river Otter. And Aurora closed the old man's eyes.

CHAPTER VII.

ST. OSYTH-BY-THE-SEA.

“ If on the crest of a mountain far
You caught a star,
Or dipped a pearl from the sapphire sea—
Would you give it me ?”

A LONG stretch of perfect sand, with cliffs of faint red at each end of its curve, and a charming little village clustered round an open common through which a rivulet ran to the sea. Such is St. Osyth-by-the-Sea, which the aborigines generally call “Tosseth.” There was a saint called Osyth, I believe, and doubtless there was excellent reason why the beautiful fourteenth century church of the village should be dedicated to her: but the country folk

found life too short to give their home its picturesque old name, and so reduced it to a convenient dissyllable.

Hogmire and his companion entered this beautiful village just as a miraculous sunset crimsoned all the west. In perfect peace lay the white cottages under the red cliffs; the stately church spire was touched by the slanting sunlight; on the sands young couples were flirting, while children romped and screamed, and the low murmur of a slowly-rising tide served as an accompaniment to the music of love and of laughter. The scene was a pleasant one, but Hogmire's mind was concentrated on the business before him.

"We shall have to stay here to-night," he said, rather sulkily, to his companion. "I had no idea the walk would have taken so long."

With this remark, he made his way to-

wards what seemed the chief street of the village, and looked round to find an inn. While he is thus occupied, I may explain what brought him to this quiet little spot upon the coast.

He was dining one day in company with that dashing young aristocrat, the Honourable George Rockfield. Hogmire liked an aristocrat; and, though the keenest of men of business, did not hesitate to lend a few hundreds (not often returned) to young fellows of that class who condescended to associate with him. The Honourable George was his debtor, and the attorney knew well how slight the chance of that relation's ceasing: but he had asked that young gentleman to dine with him at Greenwich, and given him the best Château Yquem to be had at the Ship, and they were now in that beatific state which is produced by a choice cigar after a first-class dinner and wine.

"That fellow Beatson, who gave us such good Opera last season, is on the Continent, I find," said Rockfield.

"Yes," replied Hogmire. "He's waiting for somebody to find money for a new start. *You* are not inclined that way, are you?"

"Not exactly. If I had any money, I wouldn't put it in a theatre or a newspaper. But the governor carefully keeps me out of temptation. Is Beatson in difficulties?"

"People of his class never are in difficulties. Speculating with other men's money is the nicest thing in the world: and it's better in dramatic matters than in most things, because loss is quite certain from the first, and a few thousands more or less are of slight importance."

"But Beatson must have lost a lot of money by the Dezii's sudden disappearance."

"Somebody did, no doubt," said Hogmire. "I should be sorry to assert it was Beatson."

"Well, I wish I knew where the fellow was," said the Honourable George.

Hogmire was silent, and puffed his cigar. He saw that Rockfield had a special reason for wanting to find the manager, but he was too astute to alarm his suspicious nature by asking any questions. By-and-by his companion resumed—

"If Beatson could find the Dezii, do you think he'd take legal proceedings against her?"

"No doubt he would. She is known to have made a lot of money, and he would get heavy damages. He must be a dull fellow, or he would have found her long ago."

"I wonder what he'd give to find her out?" said Rockfield, musingly.

"Ha, ha, my young friend," thought Hogmire, "*that's* your little game is it? Well, you *are* a scoundrel, to want to make money by betraying the poor girl."

For, to do Hogmire justice, though he worshipped his young aristocrats, he had a keen eye for their faults; and he felt a strong contempt for a gentleman who would do what of course an attorney might do in the way of business. And I don't think that he would himself have done anything quite so shabby as what had evidently entered Rockfield's mind.

"You know where she is, do you?" he said presently.

"I think I do."

A sudden combination flashed across Hogmire's mind. His rare genius for intrigue was never at rest.

"Well, as Beatson is not in town, and I dare say you'd like some money, I'll give you fifty pounds for her address."

"Beatson would give me a monkey," replied the other.

"I'm not very sure about that. Besides,

you know, this is pure speculation on my part. I am just as likely to lose the fifty as to make more by it."

"I don't know," said Rockfield. "You're much too cool a hand to throw away fifty pounds for nothing. Come, say you'll make it a hundred."

Hogmire, who liked to be flattered about his cleverness, at length assented, and asked for particulars.

"It's all simple enough," said the Honourable George. "I was down at a little place called St. Osyth-by-the-Sea: there's a cantankerous old cat of an aunt of mine down there, and she's promised to leave me some money. There are cliffs there, you know, and I was lying on the grass at the top of one, smoking a cigar, when, by Jove, sir, from down below there came an Italian air—I forget its name—sung in a style that made me start. 'Gad,' I thought, 'if that's

a mermaid, I'd like to engage her for the Opera.' I got as near to the edge of the cliff as I dared, and poked my head over—and just then a coastguardsman came by, and thought it looked so dangerous that he pulled me back by the legs, and my hat went right over the cliff. 'Beg pardon, sir,' he said, 'but better your hat than your head, you know.' Well, after swearing a little, I found out from him a way down the cliffs, and scrambled to the sands, and picked up my hat rather damaged. It was a very quiet corner of the beach, with some odd nooks in the cliffs, and I expect my lady had been bathing by herself, and was singing as she dressed. Any way, I beheld a nice-looking little party some distance off, with her back hair blowing about in the wind, and a white Maltese dog barking on the sands. It was a jolly figure, and I resolved to see if the face was to match; so I

walked pretty fast, and overtook her, and by Jove, sir, it was the Dezii! There's no mistaking that lively little rogue. She sang just like a bird, if you remember, Hogmire."

"I remember. What happened next?"

"Why, it struck me my discovery might be of some value, so I took care not to alarm her. I went on to the village, and sauntered about till I saw her go to her house—it was called Laburnum Villa. Then I got a list of visitors, and found out that a Monsieur and Madame Loisel were lodging there. And then I told my amiable old aunt I had sudden business in town, and came right away, and had the good luck to meet you in Pall Mall. That's about all."

"Who is Monsieur Loisel, I wonder?"

"I asked no questions, not wanting to frighten her away before I had done something. You may have Monsieur into the bargain, for the same money," he said, laughing.

"I suppose I may," said Hogmire. "Well, I shall leave town to-morrow morning, and, if I find the young lady at Laburnum Villa, I'll send you a cheque by the next post."

"All right," said the Honourable George, who knew the attorney kept his promises.

Thus did it happen that Hogmire and his companion "might have been seen," as Mr. James used to say, entering St. Osyth at sunset.

The inn bore the sign of the Rockfield Arms, for the noble relations of the Honourable George had considerable property in the neighbourhood. Hogmire left his comrade to make arrangements for dinner and beds, and strolled on to discover Laburnum Villa.

It was a little bow-windowed place, facing the sea. There was no laburnum in its trim front garden, but it had a hedge of fuchsia in flower, and great myrtle and

limoncina trees climbed up the wall. One of the windows was wide open; a globular lamp stood on the table; and as Hogmire passed he heard a very untuneable piano touched, and then a glorious voice throbbed through the air a melody of Schubert's.

"It is all right," he thought. "But how about Monsieur?"

There was a billiard-room at the Rockfield Arms, and they went there in the course of the evening, and joined in a game of pool. The best player present was a foreigner, of a type quite different from that which you generally see at English watering places; and Hogmire thought it might possibly be the *soi-disant* Loisel. Subsequent inquiry of the marker proved his guess right.

"He's a French gent, and has been staying here ever so long with a lady as is his sister: only she's a deal more like a lady

than he's like a gentleman. He does nothing but play billiards or dominoes: he brings a big box of dominoes with him, and is quite delighted if anybody will play with him. He'll be here to-morrow early, you may be sure, to see if either of you gents goes to the billiard-room."

"That marker has earned his shilling," said Hogmire to "Smith." "You stay here to-morrow morning and play billiards with the fellow, or dominoes if he prefers it, as long as he pleases. That will leave me a fair field for my little enterprise."

Whereupon, after a few glasses of port, the worthy attorney went off to bed, with a clear conscience and a grateful heart.

CHAPTER VIII.

UNDER THE CLIFFS.

“ Ah, there is one who follows thee lonely
Under the cliffs by the sea !”

QUITE right was the “marker.” Smith found M. Loisel at an early hour after breakfast, and accepted his challenge to billiards. Thereupon Hogmire, feeling sure that he would be uninterrupted, started in search of Madame.

He was lucky. As he approached Laburnum Villa, he saw the lady emerge, followed by her Maltese dog, and carrying a small bundle which suggested a bathing dress and

towels. It was her custom, doubtless, to find some quiet nook among the cliffs, afar from prying eyes, and there to prepare herself for her matutinal interview with the ocean. Hogmire, cautiously following on her track, saw her trip gaily along the beach, vanishing at last from his sight where the cliffs ran down to the very verge at which the sea and the sand met.

Pretty sure that the *baigneuse* must return by the way she came, her pursuer sat upon a granite boulder that stood out amid the sandy slope, and commenced a cigar.

Hogmire, you may remember, always carried on his travels a strong binocular glass. On a certain occasion one of its lenses had been broken, and the new one was by no means so good as the old : so, whenever our friend opened it, he found excellent reason for anathematizing his niece

and Paul Veryan. He opened it now, to occupy his leisure by making out the few sails in the distance. Then something vaster swam into his ken, and he saw a big steamer—probably a P. and O.—gallantly passing up channel. By and by he turned his glass westward, and actually caught a glimpse of the pretty cantatrice, who had swum beyond the cliffs and was playing with the frolic brine. The child swam like a Nereid, or like the lady of Paphos herself.

She seemed to enjoy the sea as thoroughly as Herman Melville's heroines—for Hogmire was extremely tired of waiting long before she left the water. The time came at last; the attorney heard her dog's sharp bark, and round the cliff they came—the little Maltese in an intense state of exhilaration, and the Dezii carolling gaily.

Hogmire met her, and apologised for ad-

dressing her, and so forth. The Dezii, being an Italian, had no hauteur at all, but laughed merrily (at his personal appearance, I fear), and listened to his story.

He informed her, with tremendous gravity, that he was a lawyer, and that, in the exercise of his profession, he had become acquainted with the fact that Mr. Beatson had found out where she was; and moreover that the said Beatson intended to take proceedings against her, and she would have to pay much money, and perhaps even be sent to prison.

He lied with such an air of truth that she could not help believing him, and implored him to tell her what she had better do.

"It was not my fault," she said, with big tears standing in her deep dark eyes. "I love to sing to great multitudes. I love suppers with pleasant people. O and I love

the sea, with its soft sands and emerald water, but I love those other things better. Only my Cousin Giuseppe grew jealous of some of my friends, and said he would kill either me or them if I did not come away, and I was afraid and came."

"Is there none of your friends whom you could ask to influence the manager?"

"There are several, but I forget their names. Your English names are not music, like ours: I can never remember what I cannot sing. But there was one," she said, after a moment's thought, "who was very kind. He gave me his portrait. I think it is here. Perhaps you know him."

The Dezii had a long thick gold chain winding like a serpent round her neck, and affixed thereto a watch about the size of a guinea, and a multitude of dainty trifles. One was a locket, which she opened, and

behold—the face of Paul Veryan! That young gentleman, when in the heat of flirtation with Diana, had given her his likeness. Imagine Hogmire's delight.

“Mr. Veryan,” he said.

“Yes, yes, that is his name. He would help me if he could, I am sure. Do you know where he is?”

“Fortunately I do. Will you write him a letter, and send this locket with it as a token that it comes from you, and I will take care that he gets it safely.”

“O, that is excellent! Let me go home and write at once.”

And away she went homeward at so rapid a pace that Hogmire, being scant of breath, had some difficulty in keeping up with her.

Giuseppe Dezii had not returned to Laburnum Villa. Diana had soon written her little note, in which she told Paul what she

supposed to be her trouble in very few words, and asked him to help her, and said that she sent his gift to remind him of her.

Hogmire, promising that she should have an answer next day, returned triumphant to the Rockfield Arms. There he found his myrmidon in a dejected condition, having lost at billiards eighteen successive half-crowns to M. Loisel, otherwise Giuseppe Dezii.

"Smith," among other accomplishments, was rather a good imitator of handwriting: so his master, having bought some lady-like note-paper at the village shop, made him write a letter to Paul Veryan as much in the Dezii's hand as possible. It was a letter of passion and indignation; she was supposed to have just heard of his marriage; she reproached him for broken faith, and returned him his locket, and so on. The

confederates thought it a masterpiece of composition, yet a good judge might at a glance have perceived that no woman ever wrote it. However, their forgery was at least as good as Count Guido Franceschini's.

What a pity it is that rogues have not an evil odour, like poisonous fruit and flowers! Haven't they, though? Dogs, who rejoice in an acuter sense of smell than we, seem somehow to sniff them out. No judge of a rascal like a good dog. I wonder was it at Hogmire or at "Smith" that the landlord's big Newfoundland growled ominously as they passed the threshold of the "Rockfield Arms."

Back to Ivyford again. No rest for the wicked. This cleverly-concocted letter must be delivered to Paul Veryan, in Aurora's presence—or to Aurora for her to give to him. This was the attorney's brilliant idea.

Another disappointment. When they returned to the Blue Lion, the birds were flown.

CHAPTER IX.

TOO LATE.

"They parted—ne'er to meet again !
 But never either found another
 To free the hollow heart from paining—
 They stood aloof, the scars remaining
 Like cliffs which had been rent asunder."

FOR two days Paul and Aurora remained together in the house of death. To many persons, to the majority indeed, this would have been painful ; but they had both to some extent, though not to an equal extent, learnt the great lesson that birth and death are ultimately identical.

On the third day, before noon, that lonely vicinage beheld an unaccustomed sight ; a postchaise with four horses pulled up at

the cottage gate, and Lord Latimer descended therefrom. The Earl, as Paul thought, looked older and more worn than when he saw him last. He came slowly up the pathway, and gazed curiously on the quaint old dwelling.

"Ah, Veryan," he said, "I am glad to see you again. So this is where my old friend chose to live and die. A strange thing for him to do, as you would say if you could have known what he was in his youth."

Paul was relieved to find that the Earl had heard on his way that the Recluse was dead.

"Let us go upstairs," said Lord Latimer. "I have not seen him for nearly sixty years. He was the handsomest man in England, then."

Very beautiful he looked in the repose of death. By his side watched the great mas-

tiff unceasingly. Aurora had brought him food and water, but the dog scarcely touched them.

“Ay,” said the Earl, as he entered the room, “there’s no friend like a dog, after all. You see this man lying here ; he might have been what he pleased in England, for he had great estates, ancient descent, and a brain of the noblest order. His life has been wasted, as we estimate such things, in this unknown corner of the world, and all because a woman deserted him. She was a woman, my dear Veryan, such as one does not see every day—brilliant, passionate, superb ; but she was false. Hence was she an inferior animal to that great dog, who could not be false to his master—ay, and who carries his love beyond death. He will never love you or me as he loved Raoul.”

The Earl bent forward, and kissed his old friend’s ice-cold forehead.

"It is a strange world," he said. "Raoul Monchenci, as everybody thought, had everything before him. He was the first fellow of us all, with the finest prospects; he married the finest woman and the most fascinating of those days; the whole aristocratic world anticipated for them a career unrivalled in splendour. He was to achieve great things; she was to beautify his achievements. *L'homme propose : le diable dispose*. In a few months Lady Monchenci had run away with her husband's most intimate friend; and Sir Raoul had shot him dead upon Wimbledon Heath. And then I lost sight of him till this day, when I find him—dead."

Paul Veryan had no comment to make, certainly no consolation to offer.

"You did not even know his name, I suppose," said the Earl, after a long pause. "This is Sir Raoul Monchenci, eleventh baronet, I think; but it matters little, for

the Monchencis were of Monchenci, in the county of Kent, at least five centuries before baronetcy was invented. He married—but no, I will not name her. She died long ago, in loneliness and grief and shame, and why should I bring her back to the memory of men? And the man for whom she left my friend Raoul was infinitely his inferior, as I know well, for he was my own brother.

“Yes, he was my elder brother, and if Raoul had not shot him, I should never have been a peer of the realm. Raoul and Hugo were the closest possible friends—their friendship was almost too close. I was Raoul’s intense admirer, and was jealous of his intimate friendship with my brother. The two were inseparable. I think Hugo did half the wooing when Raoul made love to Lady Gertrude. Well, there is not much story to be told. Raoul married her; they went much into society; the choicest avenue

of life seemed open before them. Of their private life nobody knew anything; perhaps they did not suit each other, but if so, there was no gossip. But one fine morning the town rung with the report that Gertrude Monchenci had left her home in company with Lord Latimer; and five days later came an account of a fatal duel—which carried Raoul away into this solitude, and made me an Earl.”

“And Lady Monchenci?” asked Veryan.

“Hugo left her at Boulogne,” said the Earl, “when he came back to fight. His was a curious but not unusual code of honour; he thought he had a right to any man’s wife if he stood up and exchanged shots for her. Gertrude, hearing what had happened, went away into Italy, and died there, full of remorse, in two or three years, having first done what she could to ease her mind by entering the Catholic Church.”

Such is a brief outline of the tragedy which turned the brilliant and wealthy Sir Raoul Monchenci into an anchorite for half a century or more. When the story was told, they descended, and the Earl sat down to some refreshment which Aurora had prepared for him. While they sat in the quaint old parlour, there was another arrival.

“Mr. Bulteel from Ottermouth.”

A tall macilent man of about fifty was shown into the room. He carried in his hand a bundle of papers tied with red tape.

“I beg your pardon, gentlemen,” he began. “I heard this morning only of Sir Raoul Monchenci’s death, and I believe I am the depository of his last will and testament. It was drawn up about a month ago.”

“It will be as well,” said Lord Latimer, “for us to know its contents. I am Sir Raoul’s oldest friend: this gentleman, though a comparatively new friend, was on the most

intimate terms with him. The Monchenci estates, as I know, are entailed, and go with the baronetcy to his great-nephew, now Sir Arthur Monchenci, with whom it would be as well to communicate at once: but, considering the way in which my friend has lived for many years, the personal property must be large."

"It is enormous," said Bulteel. "My father was Sir Raoul's confidential agent for many years, and I succeeded to his confidence. He invested the whole of his income, except about three hundred a year, which he reserved for personal expenses, and five thousand a year (sometimes a thousand or two more) which we sent for him anonymously to certain charities. The balance has been invested, and the investments have been most successful, and it will take some time to ascertain their precise value for the payment of probate duty."

"Well," said the Earl, "what is the tenor of the will?"

"It is short and simple," said Bulteel. "The testator leaves £100,000 to his successor in the baronetcy, the same sum to be divided among the charities to which he contributed, his plate and pictures and books, here and at Monchenci in Kent, to the Earl Latimer, and makes Mr. Paul Veryan residuary legatee."

"But will there be anything left for the residuary legatee?" asked Lord Latimer.

"A little, my lord," said Bulteel, with the subdued smile which befits a lawyer. "I have just looked hurriedly through the papers, and have estimated Mr. Veryan's legacy—quite roughly, your lordship will observe—at about three hundred and fifty thousand pounds. I should think this to be a minimum."

"Why, Veryan," said the Earl, "this is

better even than the Thaumaturgical Commission."

As for Paul and Aurora, you may imagine they were rather amazed. Most of us know what it is to be stunned with extremely bad news ; to be suddenly informed that your banker has stopped, or your favourite son come to grief, or your pet daughter run away with a fascinating draper's assistant. But to be stunned with good news is a sensation which so seldom happens to anybody—and so much seldomer to people who live by literature—that I may surely be forgiven for not attempting to describe it. And then comes the question, is it good news, this same ? Is it well, in this world of poverty and crime, to be the possessor of a third of a million of money ? Some people, we know, are ready to assume any responsibility, especially when it takes the form of money.

"I don't think I ought to accept this prodigious fortune, my lord," said Paul Veryan, after the lawyer had left them. "In the first place, I feel as if it would be robbing the Monchenci family."

"We want a treatise," said Lord Latimer, reflectively, "on the casuistry of testamentary dispositions. There are an immense number of difficult questions connected with them. But in these days casuistry is a neglected science."

"I have neglected to study it, certainly," said Paul, "for which reason I suppose I am now in a perplexity. Ought Sir Raoul to will this vast sum away from his family? Have I any right to accept it?"

"Do you think," asked Aurora, "that anybody has a right to possess such an immense sum? I wonder how many poor people it would supply with enough to live on?"

"From five hundred to a thousand, perhaps," said the Earl.

"Then doesn't it seem dreadful," pursued Mrs. Veryan, "that one man should have enough to keep a thousand people?"

"If he does not use it properly," said Lord Latimer. "But a man with that sum of money might so use it as to be of advantage to many thousand people. A firm of merchant-princes, with that capital, might employ thousands in their factories and ships and warehouses. There's a parable, Mrs. Veryan—you probably recollect the parables better than a profligate old nobleman like me—in which an unenterprising person is represented as burying his talent in a napkin. Well, that's what your husband would do, if, on receipt of this money, he were to divide it among a thousand poor people."

"What would you have him do with it?" she asked.

"I don't think I'll offer any advice till I see him in possession of the money."

The Earl stayed to his old friend's funeral. He was buried in the churchyard of a solitary church, about a mile away upon the moor. Sir Raoul had mentioned in his will this place of burial: self-exiled from the halls of the Monchenci, he would not share their ancient vault of death. Sir Arthur, the great-nephew and heir, was chief mourner; a pleasant-faced young man of five and twenty, somewhat low in stature and in forehead. And a very noticeable mourner was the great dog Argo, who stalked solemnly along with the procession, and stood watchful through the service as if he understood every weighty word thereof, and went home again with the mourners.

That day the party separated: the Earl to Caprice, Sir Arthur to London, Paul and Aurora to St. Osyth, for they pined for

sea-breezes. Mr. Bulteel took possession of the effects at the cottage. Just as they were leaving, he discovered in a writing-desk a letter addressed to Paul Veryan, with the curious superscription—“*Not to be opened for a year from my death.*”

Paul handed it to Lord Latimer.

“Take care of it for me, my lord,” he said. “I might not be able to resist the temptation of another mystery.”

Sir Arthur was gone. Carriages were waiting for the Earl and our hero. But where was Argo? Paul considered that Sir Raoul had made the noble dog his special charge, and intended to take him to St. Osyth. He was nowhere to be found.

“Perhaps he has gone to the grave,” said Lord Latimer.

They walked together over the steep moorland to the lonely church. There lay Argo—stretched upon his master’s grave—dead.

CHAPTER X.

HOGMIRE'S SUCCESS.

*"Le couple heureux, loin d'importun visage,
Boit nuit et jour dans la coupe de miel."*

"**A**T last," said Paul with a sigh of relief, as they saw their luggage brought upstairs to the first floor of a charming mansion facing the sea, "at last we shall have a little quiet together. A third of a million of money may be excellent good, when I get it, and have made up my mind what to do with it; but it is an awful nuisance to have one's honeymoon interrupted. May I have a cigar, Aurora, while you get yourself into order?"

"Yes, dear, I'll bring you a light. We

had such an ample lunch, that I thought you would not care for a regular dinner, so I ordered some lobsters. I know you will like lobsters."

"Slightly," he said, lighting his weed. Then he sat by the open window, and looked out at the lazy lounging folk upon the sands, and thought what a nice spell of lotos-eating he would have with Aurora before he went back to the world, whether to set up as a millionaire or not.

Little did he think that the fairy figure he saw tripping along the sands with a tiny white Maltese as her companion was destined seriously to interfere with his tranquillity.

Deftly, when Aurora returned and his cigar was finished, did he concoct a lobster-salad. Paul was admitted to have no rival for lobster-salad and *vers de société*. Let us leave him to his transient felicity, and follow Hogmire and his companion.

When they got back to Ivyford, foot-sore and weary, the birds of Hogmire were flown. Whither? that was the question. Mrs. Chubb was reticent. Everything that had occurred made her suspicious of Hogmire and "Smith." The latter, confident of his astucity, went off to question Joe. He found that worthy in the stable-yard, smoking the shortest of all possible pipes.

But Joe was surly, and obdurate to all offers of beer or cider. And when the clerk persevered in his inquiries, the stalwart ostler caught him by the collar, and gave him a slight shake, saying,

"Thee'rt from Lunnon, I hear. Thee'd best go back to Lunnon, and leave off spying on thy betters. Let I catch thee here again, and I'll hoist thee over the wall."

"Smith" departed, in great discomfiture, and rather glad to get away. However, he and his master contrived to hit upon the

track of the fugitives at last : and Hogmire, when he had traced them to Sir Raoul's cottage, left his Achates on the watch, being particularly desirous not to be observed by his niece.

Of course the result of all this underhand roundabout work was that Hogmire reached St. Osyth-by-the-Sea about an hour after Paul and Aurora. He went again to the Rockfield Arms ; dined with great gusto on pork chops and port wine ; lost some silver to M. Loisel at billiards ; and went with a clear conscience to bed, where he dreamt the dreams of a beatified attorney.

The devil gives his friends good cards when he can. Hogmire was in luck next day. Aurora was tired in the morning ; she didn't feel disposed to go out after breakfast ; she would sit at the window and read a novel till Paul returned from his dip. So Paul, having polished off a few dozen

prawns, and some strawberries and cream, and a bottle of Lord Latimer's Rudesheimer, went to the library, and was lucky enough to get her my friend Mr. Blackmore's *Cradock Nowell*. Leaving her in this pleasant company, off he went with Growl and Wag to find marble sands and plenteous depth of water.

Off he went, as happy and careless as a lark at daybreak. "Smith" had been on the watch, you may be sure. He reported to Hogmire that Paul had started, with dogs and towels, evidently on a bathing expedition. The excellent attorney at once directed him to take the forged letter to Mrs. Veryan, and to say that it was of great importance.

CHAPTER XI.

CAVE CANES !

"In the ring an open set-to
Is honester than aly stiletto."

TOM HARINGTON always used to say that if he felt in particularly high spirits—"good form" I think was the phrase—he knew something unpleasant was going to happen. Had he seen his friend Paul Veryan that morning, going off in the jolliest way to have his dip in the sea, he would assuredly have predicted that some evil was about to befall him.

It was a perfect morning, and Paul was in a humour to enjoy it. He walked a mile away from the little watering-place,

and found a line of rocks that ran boldly into the sea. The spot was lovely. He went out to the farthest rock, and found twenty feet of water beneath him. Then he undressed, and took a header into the clear water, and swam out to blue depths of brine. The two dogs looked at him wistfully for half a minute or so, and then plunged in after him.

Paul, having had his swim, and leisurely dressed himself, strolled quietly back beneath the red cliffs towards Tosseth, smoking a cigar. He thought as he went what a lucky fellow he was. Not long ago he had regarded himself as permanently destined to ill-luck ; as doomed to descend the hill of life in a lonely weary fashion, and to become extinct like the end of a cigar flung into some stagnant pool. Now he found himself endowed with the most charming and intelligent wife in the world—how

charming and how intelligent he had not yet learnt—and with all manner of possibilities before him, a third of a million of money among the rest. To do Paul justice, he thought very much more of Aurora than he did of the money. Still, he did think of the money, of course. Not altogether with satisfaction. He could not divest himself of the feeling that it would be an awful responsibility. When a fellow is to the manner born, and comes into a great estate and a great income which his successors have held for centuries, he naturally feels a kind of right to such possessions. The distinction between Earl and Churl seems quite natural and legitimate to an Earl of twenty descents. But if wealth descends on a man in a sudden shower, as a mere matter of accident, and without his having done anything to deserve it, he may well ask himself seriously the question—"What ought I to do with it?"

This question Paul perpetually asked himself, and had not yet succeeded in choosing an answer.

Should he give the bulk of this money to the poor, after some such fashion as Mr. Peabody's? Paul, in his days of journalism, had written some strong things as to the duty of the rich to the poor. Ay, and he had felt what he had written. He had seen clearly that the present state of English pauperism is a proof that we are not a civilized people; that the magnificence of our Court, the comfortable splendour of our prelates, the brilliancy of our aristocracy, the sordid opulence of our merchant-princes, are utterly unwholesome and abominable while they rest on a foundation of poverty, ignorance, and crime. He had written all this, over and over again, in keen epigrammatic sentences that cut like a Toledo blade. Now came the opportunity of practical self-

sacrifice. Here was a huge ingot of gold to be placed in his right hand ; should he give it to the poor ? If so, how ? How could he really do good to the largest number of those whom he profoundly pitied ? He thought of the long monotonous history of charities ; of the hospitals which had furnished snug berths for Masters and Wardens ; of the colleges and schools, designed for the very poor, to which none but the very rich could now find entrance ; of the reckless expenditure and extravagance which seem inseparable from eleemosynary endowments. The melancholy weight of human penury, the intolerable complexity of the problems involved in every attempt to lessen it, bewildered Paul.

“Pshaw,” he said to himself, sitting down on a boulder to light another cigar, “why should I strive to perform the impossible ? Nobody else does. Suppose I buy a yacht

—not a racing thing like Thorold's *Iberia*, but a comfortable steam-yacht—and take Aurora right away among the Greek islands. Egad, I might buy an island over there, and build a marble palace with courts and fountains, and bring up my boys and girls as young Pagans—believers in Apollo and Aphrodite. What a divine life! I should feel like the son of Laërtes, only with no war of Troy to bother me. That fuliginous London, with its mad waste of life and its multitudinous troubles, would seem a strange dream of other years, of another life. There would be for me no *Times* or *Telegraph*, no Gladstone or Disraeli, no Tennyson or Browning. Should I write a poem? Not I. Better far to live a poem. I'd rather be Odysseus than Homer.

Paul was monologizing in this indolent fashion when he suddenly heard a tremendous canine clamour, which brought him

down from his castle in the air. Growl and Wag were in a state of furious excitement, barking at somebody as if they would split their little throats. Paul got up to see what had happened. The object of their animosity was a foreigner who had been sitting on the shingle; and who now, having risen to his feet, was doing his best to keep them at a distance by throwing pebbles at them. It was vain. Growl and Wag were in an immitigable fury with him: even their master could not pacify them. However, he called them off, and then began to apologise to the person whom they had attacked. An immediate recognition occurred.

“Signor Dezii!” said Paul, somewhat surprised. “Are you staying down here? I am very glad to see you.”

And therewith he extended his hand. Giuseppe Dezii did not take it. He had

turned quite pale. Paul did not know what to make of him.

"I hope the Signora is well," he went on. "We have all been wondering at her disappearance. Is she here? I am staying here with my wife: we should be delighted to see her."

"Your wife!" said Giuseppe.

"Yes," said Paul, quietly. "I have not been married very long, and we are taking holiday just now. Tell me, is your cousin with you?"

"Yes," said Giuseppe. "What a fool I have been!"

"Why, what is the matter?" asked Paul. "What troubles you?"

"Ah! Mr. Vryan," he said, "will you forgive me? Do you remember that night when someone ran a dagger into you? It was I."

"You!"

"Yes. I thought you loved Diana, and Diana loved you. I love her madly. She cares nothing for me. We were boy and girl together, plucked grapes together, tamed starlings together. I tell her, hoarse and wild with passion, that I love her: she says, 'Of course you love me, my cousin.' I say it again and again: she laughs at me. I reproached her with loving you: she laughed. Then I tried to kill you—that is what such laughs come to. I failed. Then I made her come away from London. But there must be someone she loves."

Paul was amazed. This then was the man who had attempted his life.

"Give me to the police, Mr. Veryan," said Giuseppe. "Let them hang me. I would rather die. Will you tell them I am a murderer?"

"Certainly not," said Paul. "You see I am alive and well. You acted under a

mistake, that is all. I shall not say a word to any one about it."

"Englishmen are generous," said the Italian. "And I know you consider that assassination does not pertain to men of honour. But you English are strong and open. You catch your foe by the throat and strike him down. We are weak: we work by subtlety and stealth—how else could we obtain our revenge?"

"It is not worth talking about," said Veryan. "Is Signora Diana down here? I should very much like to see her."

"Yes," said the other, "we have been here for some time. It is very dull. I wish I had not taken her from London. But come: it is not far to where we live: we shall be likely to find her at home."

So Paul and his assassin walked in friendly fashion along the sands towards Tosseth. Growl and Wag gravely disapproved, and

wondered to each other that their master could be such a fool.

They reached Laburnum Villa, and found the cantatrice at home. Full of delight was she to greet Paul Veryan again: and of course it immediately occurred to her that he had arrived in answer to her appeal. Her cousin, not feeling quite at ease in the company of the man he had tried to kill, left them alone together, and was smoking in the garden.

"It is so kind of you to come and see me," she exclaimed. "I am in such distress. Can you help me?"

"But you do not tell me what is the matter," said Paul, who thought the little singing-bird did not look very unhappy.

"Have you not had my letter? Surely you came in answer to it?"

An explanation ensued. Paul saw at once that some trick had been played upon

her, but could not conjecture the motive.

"This man who called himself a lawyer," said Paul; "what was he like?"

"O so ugly! But I know in England very respectable people are always ugly, so I gave him my letter and the picture at once."

"Picture!" said Paul. "What picture?"

"O how foolish I am! I did not tell you. I sent in my note to you that locket with your portrait, that you might be sure it was from me."

"A mere vulgar thief after all," was Veryan's first reflection. "Yet no. The locket would hardly sell for a sovereign: there must be some intrigue in the matter. I am always meeting with odd bits of adventure," he said to himself. "What in the world can this mean? What good or evil can the possession of my portrait do?"

"You seem annoyed, Mr. Veryan. I hope

my giving this man the locket has done no harm."

"I don't see how it can. Did he promise an answer to the letter?"

"Yes, it should have been here some days ago. When I saw you, of course I thought you had come yourself instead of sending an answer. It is very strange. Do you think Mr. Beatson has anything to do with it?"

"Most unlikely," said Paul. "Beatson is not in England, and has other things to attend to. No doubt when your cousin induced you to break your agreement with him, it was a loss to him, and if he pleases he can claim damages: but if young ladies will do wild things, they must take the consequences. Beatson is not avaricious, and I dare say will be moderate in his demands. I feel sure he has nothing to do with this transaction. But what it means I cannot conceive. The fellow wouldn't have taken all

the trouble just to steal that ridiculous locket."

"Ah heaven!" exclaimed the Dezii, "he met me all alone under the cliffs. He might have robbed me of all my jewelry—and of this diamond, which the Russian Prince with the long name threw me in a bouquet—and I had nobody to defend me but little Snow. No, he was not a mere thief."

"Uncommonly odd," said Paul, reflectively. "However, it is no good bothering about it. My wife is here, Signora; will you come and see her?"

"Your wife! You are married since! And she is here. How delightful! I will put on my hat, and we will go at once."

Away went the Dezii to attire herself for walking. Soon she was ready, with the daintiest little hat crowning her raven hair, and a flutter of lace about her pretty throat, and her dress looped up to show the slen-

derest of ankles. She was the admiration of Tosseth all that season. Her toilets were as varied and bewitching as if she had been dressing for Trouvelle itself—as if M. Worth had been specially retained upon her suite.

So Paul Veryan and the Dezii walked gaily along the sands, followed by their dogs, and arrived at his lodgings, which bore the appropriate though not original name of Sea View.

Aurora was gone out, having left no message.

CHAPTER XII.

MISERRIMA.

“O

The difference to me !”

IMAGINE a brilliant summer day, calm and delicious, with all cloudland sleeping in still serenity in the blue sea of æther, a resplendent pageant, and with a warm south wind dishevelling the long luxuriant grass and wooing the faint fragrance of the languid flowers. Suddenly—who does not remember such changes?—the wind veers eastward, the air chills, the sky grows grey, the flowers droop, the whole scene is altered. Like this, but infinitely more terrible, is the change when love recedes from the scene.

Aurora, the most sensible girl in the

world, received from the hands of the maid-servant Hogmire's insidious packet, with the message that it was "very particular." Now Aurora had made a most excellent resolve, which I cordially commend to all young wives, and that was never to open her husband's letters. Notwithstanding what Tennyson and the minor novelists teach, man is *more* than woman. A man's life, if he be manly, must contain much that no woman's life can contain : and the wisest wife is she who, freely trusting her husband, makes no inquiry into his secrets. I know this is a hard doctrine to preach to womankind. They have a beautiful inquisitiveness, which I feel sure was designed by Providence to do good service in some way or other : precisely how, nobody yet seems to have discovered.

Aurora, true to her resolve, left this letter on the table—though her fair fingers

had felt that there was some article of jewelry within—and tried to proceed with *Cradock Nowell*. She did not succeed. The glorious descriptions of the New Forest scenery had no charm for her. It was very odd: she could not help looking at that tempting provoking packet, and wondering what it contained, who had sent it, why it was so “very particular.”

And to add to the temptation, Paul was delayed so much beyond his time. He must be coming now, she thought. The open window commanded a long stretch of sand, where she had seen him walking gaily away with the dogs, and waving her a brief adieu. No sign of him.

She could stand it no longer. She opened the letter. There was the passionate indignant protest which Hogmire had manufactured for Diana Dezii: there also was Paul's portrait, set in gold.

But for that portrait, I think Aurora would have scrutinized the letter, and discovered its falseness. It was but a poor production. Of course our heroine was very angry : at the same time she was calm enough to reflect that she had no business at all with her husband's ante-nuptial flirtations, and that to whomsoever he might have given locketts and portraits, to her he had given himself. The thing was unpleasant : but the person most to be pitied was Signora Dezii, after all. Refreshing herself with this thought, Aurora determined to go and meet Paul on his way from his dip, and take him the letter, and tell him how sorry she was for having opened it. Wise little woman !

She started, accordingly, and strolled along the margin of the sea, close to the waves—clutching in her hand, a little nervously, the miserable packet. As she walk-

ed along, somewhat in meditative mood, her attention was aroused by light laughter, and the well-known bark of dogs. Looking up she saw, not fifty yards from her, Paul walking along the beach with Diana Dezii—whom she recognized at the first glance. They were talking and laughing merrily; they did not see her. The dogs were vivacious and voluble.

This was too much for Aurora. Had she reflected for a moment, it would have occurred to her that Paul was hardly likely to walk straight towards his own home with a lady whom he preferred to his wife. But that confounded letter had been too much for Aurora, and she did not reflect at all. What she did was to sit down on the nearest rock, close to the sea, and wish the waves would carry her away. As she sat, her hand hanging loosely, she felt the touch of something cold. It was Wagtail's long

black nose. He, amid his gambols with Growl and Snow, had seen his mistress walking dejectedly in the distance, and followed her, and now looked up into her face with dark melancholy sympathising eyes.

“Poor old Wag!” said Aurora. “Shall we go away together somewhere, all alone?”

Circumstantial evidence, which has frequently misled both judges and juries, may well mislead a young lady. Of course Aurora ought to have known better. Her belief in her husband's love and loyalty should have been proof against all apparent evidence.

It is easy to say these things, but humanity is imperfect, and few people have any calmness of judgment in times of perplexity. It must, I think, be admitted, that Aurora had her excuses. The letter and locket she could have endured; but immediately

afterwards to see her husband talking and laughing gaily with the writer of the letter was wholly intolerable. Her mind was not calm enough to weigh matters fairly, or she would have perceived that there was no evidence against Paul of unparalleled and unpardonable wickedness; but in a tumult of amazement and indignation, she could determine on nothing, except to get as far away as possible from her persecutors and betrayers.

“Come, Wag,” she said, in her wrath, “let us go away from them all.”

And she rose from her seat and walked rapidly along the sands, without any idea in her mind except to get as far as possible away from Paul and that wicked Italian minx.

No words could describe her misery at this moment. She had loved Paul absolutely. He was all the world to her. She could

not conceive of existence without him. And now, though the imperishable love existed still, it was in a changed form. She thought of him with terror and contempt. I think, if she had met him suddenly there on the lonely sands, she would have thrown herself sobbing into his arms, and told him as best she could all her misery. For, somehow or other, it all felt to her like a hideous nightmare—as if there were two Pauls, a false Paul and a true, and she were flying from the false Paul to take refuge with the true.

Ah, but where was he? Was there any Paul except the one whom she had but just now seen walking gaily along the beach with Diana Dezii? Was the man she loved a mere creation of her own? Some poet or poetaster has described people who look like human beings, but their heads come off (just like decanter-stoppers) and you find they are hollow inside. 'Tis a queer myth :

but one's friends do occasionally turn out hollow, with nothing in them half so good as the warm wine that flushes the decanter.

Aurora Veryan, flying from the false Paul, and wondering vaguely whether the true Paul . . . the Paul on whose breast she longed to lay her aching head . . . was anywhere in the world, or must be sought for out of the world, was suddenly recalled to her ordinary self by a voice she knew, uttering her name. And lo a young girl came running towards her over the sands, and she was enthusiastically embraced by that hare-brained little vagrant—Agnes Brabazon.

“Aurora!” she exclaimed, very much out of breath, “to think of your being here! I am so glad. Come and see Aunt Anastasia.”

She pointed to a wheel-chair, propelled along the sands at some distance by a footman about seven feet high, in magnificence of plush.

"Aunt Anastasia is not very well, so she came down here for change of air; and she wanted somebody to enliven her, so the dear old thing took me away from Miss Bettesworth's, and brought me with her. Come along, darling, you must come and talk to her."

Aurora found herself almost dragged to where the superb footman had halted with his mistress.

"Do you know, Aurora," went on the chattering little Agnes, "we met your uncle this morning. He pretended not to see me."

"What, Mr. Hogmire?" said Aurora. And then there flashed across her mind a strange conviction that he was in some way connected with her present misery.

"Didn't you know he was here? How odd!"

But by this time they had reached Miss Brabazon: and the stately old lady wel-

comed Aurora very kindly, and told her she must come and have some luncheon. Aurora, whose brain was getting into a thoroughly turbid state, was glad to do as she was told.

Miss Anastasia had taken up her quarters in an isolated cottage that stood at the head of a green valley dividing the cliffs. There was a disused water-mill in the valley, where once paper had been made, but no other dwelling.

"If I come to the sea," said Miss Anastasia, "I like to be quiet. I don't want to see a lot of foolish people walking about in clothes of the latest fashion. Look at that old water-mill, with the great wheel that has not turned for years, overgrown with moss . . . and the forgotten orchard, where nobody comes in the autumn to pick up the apples that rot in the long grass . . . and the cliffs and sea beyond. It's a picture. I

often think I am like that old mill: I imagine the wheel turning and dripping, and the water sparkling, and the men at work, and boys and girls in the orchard picking the apples, and it reminds me of my own youth. I might have been some use in the world: now I am just like that old mill—a picturesque ruin. But what's the use of being sentimental? Agnes, give Mrs. Veryan some of that *pâté*. Mulliner, let us have a bottle of Tokay. You don't look very well to-day, Mrs. Veryan; tired, I dare say; this is the wine to refresh you," she continued, as the butler poured the luscious green lymph into delicate glasses. "It is the gift of an Austrian Archduke, who did me the honour to fall in love with me sixty years ago or more, and who even now thinks me worth a *cadeau*."

Miss Anastasia was garrulous out of kindness. The acute old lady perceived that

there was something the matter with Aurora, and resolved to find out what it was, and offer such consolation as might seem fit. So, luncheon being over, she sent little Agnes away, and frankly broached the subject.

Aurora, after a little pressing, told the whole story, and showed her the terrible letter.

Miss Anastasia reflected for a few moments.

"Now, child," she said at length, "listen to me. Suppose the very worst. Your husband, we will say, loved this actress better than you, and meets her again with pleasure. This is very shocking: but you are his wife, you see; and your duty is to remain with him until he makes it impossible."

Aurora looked extremely miserable.

"However," resumed the old lady, "I

don't believe anything of the kind. This letter looks to me like a forgery. It is not a woman's style not in the least an Italian singer's style. If she had written this letter, would she have been talking and laughing merrily with your husband this morning? I don't pretend to explain the affair, but I believe there is some trick. Where the portrait came from is the greatest puzzle or would be, only there is something else that puzzles me more still . . . and that is, who can want to make mischief between you and your husband?"

Then Aurora made mention of her uncle, and told how Agnes had seen him that morning, and explained as well as she could his dislike to her marrying, and the probability of his being revengeful.

"Hogmire is the *mot d'énigme*," said Miss Anastasia, laughing triumphantly. "An amorous and revengeful attorney would

stick at nothing. *He* wrote that letter, depend on it: the little Dezii never wrote it . . . she's no more in love with your husband than I am."

"But the locket?" sobbed Aurora.

"That will explain itself, in good time. Your husband will tell you where it came from, when he sees it. O, it is all quite clear. Now, you are crying because you have nothing to cry about—it's the way with girls. Drink another glass of the Archduke's wine, and then come to my room to try the effect of *eau de Cologne* and fresh water."

Aurora obeyed. The kind old lady's theory consoled her, and she began to believe it might be true. Anything, surely, rather than believe her husband false.

"You saw me having my morning crawl," said Miss Anastasia. "I don't like to move fast before luncheon. But now we'll have

out the pony-carriage, and drive into St. Osyth, and find your husband. He has met his friend Diana Dezii, and you have met your friend Anastasia Brabazon—so you are quits. And when you give him that letter and locket, all the mystery will be cleared up in a moment.”

The carriage, a basket drawn by two charming little chestnuts, came round to the door. Agnes was left at home, for the small seat behind would hold only a Lilliputian groom. Miss Anastasia, though of immemorial age, wielded her parasol-whip as cleverly as any “girl of the period.” The brisk drive along the sands made Aurora feel and look quite joyous: and, as she was looking her very best, they nearly drove over—Hogmire.

That worthy gentleman had been cautious-ly on the watch. Lying *perdu* among the trees which grew beside the rivulet that

runs through St. Osyth, he swept the beach with his lorgnette, and saw all that happened between Sea View and Laburnum Villa. He saw Aurora, after his dastardly letter had been delivered, leave her lodgings and walk westwards. He saw Paul emerge from Laburnum Villa in company with the Dezii, and was rather puzzled by the incident. What did it mean? Were Paul and Aurora previously aware that Diana was at St. Osyth? If so, his malignant letter was a failure.

No : there were evident signs that he had succeeded in doing some sort of mischief. He beheld Paul and his companion pass on in one direction, while Aurora was walking in the other. If all had been right, assuredly she would have joined them. She did not ; she rested awhile among the rocks, and then pursued her way in an opposite direction. Hogmire began to think that his vile aims would be accomplished.

He continued to watch, lighting a cigar, and comfortably planting himself on a seat beneath the trees. This sort of business delighted him. He had thrown an explosive shell into the enemy's camp, and he waited with fiendish glee for the expected result. He spent quite a pleasant morning, I assure you.

Paul and the Dezii went to Sea View: *that* was odd. He could not see what they did there: we can. Paul, finding that Aurora had gone out, imagined that she would soon return again, and in the meantime amused his companion with a glass of effervescent wine. When Aurora did not return, they started in search of her, and Hogmire had the felicity of seeing them wander from end to end of the beach, and at last turn off into the little town itself, to see if she might be found at the library, or doing a little solitary shopping.

"She's gone off altogether, I believe," said Hogmire to himself with a sort of triumph. "Now, my lady, I've got my revenge."

And he left his hiding-place, and walked delightedly down to the sands, meditating on Paul Vryan's probable lunacy, when he found Aurora had left him.

"I wonder what he'll do," thought Hogmire. "He can't suspect *me*, that's one blessing; he's just the fellow that wouldn't mind shooting you for a trifle. And I wonder what she'll do. Drown herself, perhaps. There are plenty of good places for doing it."

Hogmire, in his ferocity, actually tried to persuade himself that he should like to hear of poor Aurora's being fished up somewhere on the coast. But he could not quite do it. He was not made entirely of flint, though he might have fed on the milk of a Hyrcanian tigress. He relented a little, and be-

gan to think he would rather on the whole his niece should not drown herself.

And, just as he began to relent, came swiftly along the sands Miss Anastasia's pony phaeton, wherein sat Aurora by the old lady's side, looking anything but suicidal.

"What the devil does this mean?" said Hogmire to himself, relapsing into sulkier ferocity than ever. And away he started towards the Rockfield Arms, determined to pour forth some of his rage on his unlucky subordinate. "Confound it!" he soliloquized, "I believe it's a failure after all. And that scamp Rockfield has had a hundred pounds out of me."

The next sight which he saw in no wise tended to improve his temper. For Paul and Diana, having searched vainly through the town for Aurora, were just entering the gate of Laburnum Villa as Miss Anastasia's carriage reached that point—and Aurora point-

ed out her husband—and the ponies were pulled up—and there was a general introduction.

“You must all come up and lunch with me to-morrow,” said the old lady. “Mrs. Veryan can show you the way. I want to hear you sing, Signora, and to hear you talk politics, Mr. Veryan. And I daresay your wife will let you flirt with my little niece, who is getting quite out of practice in this solitary place.”

So the party dispersed. That evening Aurora confessed to Paul how she had doubted him—and what in her distress she had dreamed of doing—and submitted, let us hope in all humility, to such punishment as her lord and master thought fit to inflict.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOGMIRE'S DEFEAT.

"Whatever your fate, in life's tortuous journey,
Never swear at a doctor or kick an attorney."

AURORA had wisely deferred her confession till after dinner. Paul, mellowed by Chambertin and a cigar, took matters more easily than he might have done if the draught had been swallowed fasting—and scolded his little wife in a style that was rather more like petting than otherwise.

"I shall take a stroll in the moonlight," he said, by-and-by, and left Aurora to *Cradock Nowell*.

When he got out on the breezy sands, he

reflected a little. He saw Hogmire's forgery, and fathomed its motive. It occurred to him that the attorney was somewhere in the neighbourhood, and he thought he would inquire at the Rockfield Arms.

"If the fellow is here, I must let him know he is found out," said Paul to himself. "It would serve him right to prosecute him for forgery."

There were a good many people in the billiard-room of the little hotel: among them Paul's quick eye at once recognized Hogmire, and Giuseppe Dezii, and that furtive personage who had excited Denis O'Brien's suspicions.

He walked straight to Hogmire. The attorney, though he possessed a considerable amount of moral (or immoral) courage, was physically a coward, and turned pale as he saw Paul Veryan approach him with a very resolute look. But Paul was very

much too wise to assault an attorney. He said, quietly enough :

"I should be glad to say a word or two to you, Mr. Hogmire. You sent a letter to my lodgings to-day which I find is a forgery. You can probably help me to discover who has committed this crime: and, as you are a gentleman of the legal profession, I feel I may rely on your assistance."

Hogmire was rather taken aback—Vernan had adroitly made two assumptions, one true and the other false: the former, that Hogmire had sent the forged letter; the latter, that he did not know it to be forged. The attorney could not at the moment decide what ground to take.

"Will you come to my room," he said, "and let us talk over the matter? My clerk here, who delivered the letter, had better come also."

He made this admission about the delivery -

of the letter in order to secure the presence of "Smith" at the coming interview: for, though Paul Veryan seemed as cool as a cucumber, Hogmire could not quite get rid of the notion that there might be a row after all. And, looking at Paul's easy length of limb and fine breadth of shoulder, he could not help perceiving that if it were a case of kicking downstairs, or of throwing out of window, there would not be any particular difficulty in its accomplishment.

So the three went together to the attorney's sitting-room.

"Now that we are alone, Mr. Hogmire," said Paul, "I have a few strong words to say to you. In order to alienate my wife from me, you and your accomplice here have committed a forgery. The proof is perfect in every point: Signora Dezii remembers what she wrote in the letter to me

- which you by telling a lie induced her to

write. This letter, full of lies, is an imitation of her handwriting, and professes to bear her signature. Your object was even more vile than the vile means which you have taken to accomplish it: you wanted to bring misery upon a lady who has only one fault in the world—that she is connected by marriage with you. Now, as I and my wife design to remain here for a short time, I must request you to leave the neighbourhood to-morrow morning. It is in my power to prove forgery and conspiracy against you and your accomplice: and, if you do not leave the place, I'll have you before the magistrate at once. If you were not an attorney-at-law, and a gentleman by Act of Parliament, I should deem it my duty to horsewhip you."

Neither Hogmire nor "Smith" made any attempt to interrupt Paul's torrent of indignant words. When he had finished, he

waited a moment for a reply; then, as neither said a word, he left the room, and walked quietly over the moonlit sands, to where his wife awaited him.

Let us leave them together. I dare say they had a pleasant evening after their previous annoyances.

As to Hogmire, he got rid of his clerk with an execration, and remained alone to reflect on the position of affairs. He was very angry—not without cause. He was not however angry with himself, or particularly angry with the unfortunate "Smith": his ire was specially directed against Providence, which (or who?) had stepped in unexpectedly to derange all his plans. Hogmire was one of those men who regard the world as managed by Providence—by which they seem to mean a kind of committee or board, not unwilling to listen to the recommendation of clever lawyers. If they were

capable of forming the idea of a divine unity, they would unquestionably hesitate before doing the rascally deeds which they do at present. They regard Providence as a kind of celestial reflexion of an earthly committee or corporate body (concerning which we know Lord Thurlow's dictum) and are therefore pretty sure that they can use bribery or cajolery with success.

The next morning Hogmire sent his clerk back to London. The game was up for the present. For himself, he determined to take a somewhat longer holiday, and see if he could not hit upon some more promising combination. He was very savage. He had thrown away a hundred pounds on Rockfield, and wasted an immensity of his own time, and had succeeded only in making it possible for Paul Veryan to accuse him of forgery. It was confoundedly provoking, you must acknowledge. How would

you like it, gentle reader?

Those who know St. Osyth-by-the-Sea are aware that on the opposite side of the shallow bay there is a pleasant little town called Gutterness—the name whereof has puzzled etymologists. Ness, of course, is intelligible enough: we all know that it signifies a cape or promontory. But who would recognise in the trivial word gutter the name Gaultier—in its Anglican form, Walter? What knight of that name held Gutterness in the old fighting centuries, I know not: but there cannot be question that Gutterness meaneth no other than Walter's headland.

Thereunto Hogmire determined to transfer himself—having a wholesome fear of Paul Veryan. There are two ways of getting from Tosseth to Gutterness. You can go round the bay: but then it is about five and twenty miles, and a most confoundedly

hilly road. You can go across the sands: but you must take care to start at the right time, for when the tide rises it comes up faster than a Derby winner could gallop—and besides, there are quicksands. But then it is only about two miles and a half. Hogmire, having made inquiry of the landlord, decided to cross the sands.

Have you forgotten Grant, gentle reader—the handsome young fellow whom Paul Veryan met at Caprice, and immediately set down as a lover of Lady Lucy's? I hope not. He is too good a fellow to be forgotten; though he is too young yet (and perhaps too good-looking) to have any definite character. Oddly enough, he started to ride from Gutterness to Tosseth on the very morning that Hogmire started to walk from Tosseth to Gutterness.

Grant rode along the sands quietly, smoking as he rode. He was a young Ulysses,

you know. He had yachted with Thorold, and drunk in multitudinous changes of scenery. He beheld, on his left hand, the long curve of green coast—with village, hamlet, mansion—with delicious alternations of woodland and cliff. He beheld, on his right hand, the long wide sweep of waves, moving forward stealthily yet with more than Atalanta's swiftness. He beheld, in front of him, many forms of advancing life—a stage coach with four horses, several waggons, farmers' daughters going to market, tramps going to the devil, and much else of a diversified kind. Among other figures he perceived a stout personage of middling height, who was no other than the illustrious Hogmire.

Riding lazily along, Grant was overtaken by a big farmer on a stout cob, who entered into converse with him on the state of the crops, a subject whereof our yachtsman knew

exactly nothing. Then the farmer began to tell him of the dangerous nature of those sands, and rapidity of the tide, and told how the Beauty of Gutterness had been lost in a quicksand, and how the passengers in the mail had been obliged to desert the coach and ride away on the horses' backs.

"Whereabouts are the worst quicksands?" asked Grant, who began to grow interested.

"There's a very bad one just a little to the right of where you see that man coming along."

And, as he said this, he indicated the advancing Hogmire.

Grant, who had looked in the direction which the farmer pointed out, suddenly dropped his pipe, uttered a wild shout, and forced his horse into a gallop.

Hogmire had disappeared.

CHAPTER XIV.

MISS ANASTASIA'S LUNCHEON.

“ . . . neque
decedit aerata triremi, et
post equitem sedet atra Cura.”

WHEN Paul Veryan came down the next morning, leaving his lazy little wife in bed, he beheld an unaccustomed sight—a small pile of letters on his breakfast-table. He turned them over—looked at the postmarks and addresses and seals—pooh-poohed a little, then went to the window and looked out. A fresh breeze was blowing; the “white horses” were tossing their manes joyously; a fleet of trawlers in the offing were making their way home-

ward with fish. He turned back to the breakfast-table : there was a lovely lobster waiting to be eaten.

" Bother the letters !" he said to himself. " I'll go and have a dip, and read 'em when I come back—or when I've polished off that lobster and a bottle of hock. I don't think my little wife will burn her foolish fingers by opening any more of 'em. What a nuisance that the penny post was ever hit upon ! It has caused more bother than anything I know since the invention of printing."

Paul Veryan, like most journalists, had a great detestation for the man who invented printing.

When he returned from his bath, he sat down with his wife to breakfast, leaving the letters unopened as long as possible. But you know, even a honeymoon breakfast, with the nicest little wife in the world, with an appetite intensified by sea-bathing, must

some time come to an end. The end came at last : Paul got his wife to light his cigar for him, and then attacked his correspondence.

“Well,” he exclaimed, after having got through it, “I call this confoundedly provoking. Here was I prepared to do some splendid act of self-sacrifice—and give up that prodigious legacy of Sir Raoul’s to the family or the poor or the Crown or somebody or other—and now I find that Sir Arthur has already thrown the affair into Chancery, and here are letters from his attorneys and his uncle’s attorneys, and I don’t know who else. They might have left me alone till we went back to town again. Don’t you think so, Rhododactulos?”

“Of course I do,” said Aurora, not without osculation. “Can’t you make them wait? We don’t want to go back yet, do we?”

"Certainly not," said Paul, very decidedly : "and we won't either, though the Lord High Chancellor himself should summon us. And I'll tell you what it is, my child : I won't answer these letters, or open any more of them, until we make up our minds to move."

I think Paul was right. When I get a letter which I know contains something unpleasant, I always put it unopened in the breast-pocket of my coat, and leave it till I feel in the humour to read it. A great deal is gained by this. If I opened it at once, and it annoyed me, I should send back an immediate reply of such a character that the writer would perceive I was annoyed. Well, that's what the fellow wants, don't you see ? Why should I gratify him ? 'Tis what he expects, too ; and, if he gets no answer for a week or a fortnight—perhaps no answer at all—how angry he becomes.

Again, this letter—a missile which he maliciously thought should wound me—reposes quietly in my pocket. When I am in a speculative mood I take it out, scan its exterior, conjecture what venomous materials he has mixed for my injury. And by-and-by I am in a curious mood—the post has brought no letters, there is nothing in the papers—or I am in a joyous careless mood, after a glass or two of generous wine on a divine summer afternoon—and I say to myself, “Let us open this poor fellow’s epistle, and smile at his spite.”

It is unfortunate for those who delight in writing such epistles, that they cannot be contrived like a bomb-shell, with some sort of fuse to blow the affair open the moment it reaches your hand.

“We’ve to lunch at Miss Brabazon’s,” said Paul presently, “and must pick up your little rival, Diana, on the way. So you had

better pay your customary visit to the bathing-machine, and I'll stroll about the sands and wait for you. It will be quite time for luncheon when you have dried that impracticable back hair of yours."

So they sallied forth, Paul deliberately dismissing all his cares till a more convenient season. Aurora went eastward to her bathing-machine; Paul westward for his stroll. When he had been wandering about an hour, and was thinking that the back hair might possibly be growing dry, he came in contact with a couple of men on horseback, both men and horses strangely splashed with sand.

It was Grant and his friend the farmer. Grant recognised Veryan, and pulled up at once.

"Glad to see you here," he said. "Perhaps you can tell me where Miss Brabazon lives. But I must go to some inn and

cleanse myself first: you see what a mess I'm in."

"We are going to luncheon at Miss Brabazon's," said Paul. "Better come to the Rockfield Arms. Have you had an adventure?"

"A frightful one," said Grant. "I have seen a man lost in a quicksand, and, if it had not been for this gentleman, I should have been lost myself."

"You don't know our sands," said the farmer. "You and your horse would have been swallowed up, if I hadn't been lucky enough to catch your rein. As it was, we'd to ride mighty fast to 'scape the tide."

"But the man who *was* swallowed," said Paul. "Do you mean to say it was impossible to save him?"

"He disappeared," said Grant, "as if he had dropped through a trap-door. When we reached the place, there was scarcely a

mark in the sand. My friend here prevented my riding right into the quicksand—I could hardly believe the man was gone. His hat had been blown away by the wind, so we brought it with us: his name is written in the lining, which may turn out a useful piece of evidence.”

The farmer showed Paul the hat. Within it was written, *Daniel Hogmire, Old Jewry.*

“By Jove, Grant,” exclaimed Paul, “I’m uncommonly glad I met you. You mustn’t say anything about the affair at Miss Brabazon’s. The man is my wife’s uncle.”

They went together to the Rockfield Arms, and Grant got himself as far as possible into his normal state: his friend the farmer, having possession of Hogmire’s hat, went off to communicate with the authorities.

“Are you going to stay long in this neighbourhood?” asked Paul, as Grant and

he started in search of Aurora. "I am doing my best to complete my honeymoon, which has been villanously interrupted by adventures."

"I congratulate you," said Grant. "Not merely on having a honeymoon (which I suppose implies a wife), but also on having adventures in your honeymoon. It must be an agreeable break to its saccharine monotony. You know what Swinburne says—

‘A mouth or twain to live on honeycomb
Were pleasant, but one tires of scented time.’"

"Swinburne and you be hanged!" quoth Paul. "You haven't answered my question."

"Well," said Grant, "I'm staying with a man at Gutterness, and just thought I'd ride over and see Miss Anastasia, who has known me from my birth, and does me the honour to scold me occasionally. And as I've chaffed you about your honeymoon, I'll make amend by a confession. Miss Anastasia has a little

relation of hers there, on whom I am slightly spoons. I want to see her, too."

"I understand," said Paul. "But here comes my wife. No word about Hogmire, mind."

They went together to find the Dezii at Laburnum Villa, and thence strolled on to Miss Anastasia's quiet retreat.

Was it a pleasant luncheon? It was. Miss Anastasia had double reason for being satisfied. Aurora and Paul had got over their difficulty—that was clear: and Grant, whom she fully approved as wooer of her niece, had ridden across the sands in search of that young lady. Miss Anastasia, always delightful, was most delightful when pleased; at other times she could be keenly sarcastic, as a good many people in society knew to their cost. Need I say that Grant and Agnes were happy—that Paul and Aurora enjoyed the golden hour, though

Paul had the Court of Chancery and the fate of Hogmire on his brain? Paul, however, had a happy and most enviable knack of forgetting his annoyances when there was no necessity for remembering them.

Then the Dezii gave poetic piquancy to the affair. She chirped and pecked like a tomtit at luncheon, and carolled like a nightingale afterwards. She was delighted with Miss Anastasia, with the old ruinous water-mill, with everything and everybody. I remember a verse or two of one of her ballads, mystic and strange—with for a theme that weird old poet Merlin, whom Heine understood, though Tennyson and Arnold cannot—

“ Merlin, the great magician,
Quelled by a woman's hand,
Lies under mighty oak trees
In the forest Broceliande . . .
“ Dews fall soft on the turf there,
Young birds twitter above :
Merlin sleeps, and surely sleep
Is better than aught save love . . .

" Merlin sleeps, while the winters
Freeze, and the summers bloom,
And the old oaks whisper softly—
He is here till the Day of Doom . . .

" O happy happy Merlin
Afar in the forest deep !
To thee alone of the sons of men
Gave a woman the gift of sleep."

CHAPTER XV.

APRÈS ?

“L’Art a besoin ou de la solitude, ou de la misère, ou de la passion.”

WHEN an author has come to such a pass that he has married his hero and killed his villain, it would probably be discreet in him to stop. The word *finis* is a great temptation, and I for my part shall exceedingly rejoice when I can write it with a clear conscience. In very truth, it is wonderful that we do not all look forward with eagerness to that inevitable *Finis* which must put a period to our story, whether it be in one volume, or two, or three. Considering that

“Man never is, but always to be blest ;”

that he has not the crudest notion of enjoying the present, but is perpetually brooding over the past or hankering after the future ; that his chief delight is to anticipate some coming pleasure—it may be his dinner, or his marriage, or the birth of an heir, or the death of a grandfather ; why it appears to me that he might as well look forward as far as his mortal eye can see, to the supreme instant of his life.

I am digressing, which is a vice. It is objected that my hero is married and my villain dead : *ergo* my novel has no further *raison d'être*. But the obvious rejoinder is, that a good many things may happen to a hero after he is married : with what may happen to a villain after he is dead I have at present no concern.

The honeymoon is over ; and Paul and his wife are back in the precincts of Megalopolis. They have a furnished cottage on

the banks of Thames, not very far from Westbrook's gardens of Alcinoüs. Paul is trying very hard to write; but he finds he cannot. He cannot satisfy himself; he wants either solitude or misery or passion, quoth our Frenchman: now a man just married has seldom the first or the second—while the third, having attained its object, has been transmuted into a voluptuous indolence.

Paul got rather savage with himself for his crassitude. Dr. Johnson held that a man who can write at all, can write when he likes—just as he held that to be affected by the weather is sheer nonsense. But there was nothing mercurial about Johnson. And perhaps after all the Doctor concealed his sensations. I am told that Mr. Charles Kingsley, who has written an ode in honour of the east wind, always goes away to Italy or the south of France when it begins to blow.

What in the world gives me this vile humour of digression to-day? There are times when the pen resolutely refuses to go straight as the brain wants to guide it, and curvets across country in the most unaccountable zigzag. Perhaps if one used a steel pen it would be better. This particular quill must have been plucked from the wing of a wild goose.

Paul was sterile. He did a little journalism, but was not satisfied with what he wrote, though doubtless it was quite good enough for the people who read newspapers. But his *magnum opus* would not move. He was writing a book; he had arranged its plan most carefully; he could get no further. The Muses were as impracticable as the Lord Chancellor: and there seemed just as little chance of Paul's book being completed as of a final decision in the great case of *Monchenci versus Veryan*.

Going down to the House one afternoon, when a row was expected between the First Minister and the leader of the Opposition, Paul encountered Thorold. The new member had commenced his career prudently ; he had been punctual in attendance and loyal in his votes, but he had made no attempt to speak. He was cordially pleased to see Paul again : and, the following day being Wednesday, promised to drive down and see Mrs. Veryan.

“Your wife is just the very person I want to see,” said Thorold, “so I am purely selfish in proposing to call. The fact is, I am in great need of a lady’s advice.”

So the next day Thorold’s mail phaeton came down to Paul’s cottage, and he engaged in colloquy with Aurora. He had much to tell her. A man of peculiar manliness, and peculiarly fond of the manliest amusements, he was at the same time a

thorough ladies' man. There was something about him that fascinated and magnetized them. And he was particularly fond of having a lady as his confidante.

It happened that Westbrook looked in upon Paul at about the same hour, so that Thorold had just the *tête-à-tête* he liked. And he had to tell Mrs. Veryan of his coming marriage with Lady Lucy Latimer—a brilliant affair so near its consummation that the settlements were in the hands of the lawyers, and the bridal gifts in preparation at the jeweller's, and a special artist of the highest class engaged to arrange the wedding-breakfast.

This, however, though a charming piece of news to bring to a lady, was not the most piquant part of Thorold's converse. For he had received a series of letters from a fair *incognita*, who wrote at Vienna—who had seen him for a moment, without introduc-

tion, at Oceanborough, and remembered with enthusiasm his "dark-brown beard, through which the sun shot golden gleams," and who contemplated the possibility of his making tea for her at some future period, while she reposed on a couch *en peignoir*. Did he make tea elegantly or awkwardly? Most men were so very awkward. Was he an eldest son? She feared so, as people said he had so much money: and she much preferred younger sons. She could pet them without anybody's objecting—and the poor fellows were always so extremely grateful.

"Well, Mrs. Veryan," said Thorold, after she had looked through this curious correspondence, "what do you think of the young lady?"

"I should think she was not very young, and not very wise."

"But her letters are remarkably clever," said Thorold.

"Wonderfully *clever*," replied Aurora. "But I should suppose her a person who, having been in some way disappointed, writes these letters for the sake of a little excitement. She will never let you know who she is, you may depend upon it."

"You don't think she'll break her heart when I marry," said Thorold.

"Not in the least likely. But if you should happen to meet in society, she would be extremely likely to say sarcastic things about your wife."

"I don't think Lady Lucy would care," said Thorold.

"No," answered Aurora. "Neither by character nor position is she within the power of satirical people. It is a fortunate thing to be an Earl's daughter, and very pretty, and very clever. Your anonymous correspondent, if in society she should encounter you and Lady Lucy, will probably

shrink into a corner, and look on curiously, and, if she says anything spiteful, say it in a whisper."

"There is a necessary limit to the number of Earls' daughters," said Thorold, with a laugh. "But if being very pretty and very clever is apt to produce envy and spite, I fear, Mr. Veryan, you will have a good deal to answer for. I am sure Lady Lucy will be delighted when I tell her what you say about her."

CHAPTER XVI.

HARD LINES.

"Qui amat, emat."

I AM not going to describe Lionel Thorold's marriage to Lady Lucy Latimer. 'Tis beyond the power of this unpoetic pen. They had a Bishop, a Dean, several Rectors, full choral service, a Duke to propose the bride's health, and a Lord Chancellor to return thanks for the bridesmaids. They started by the Great Northern (of course a special train) for Latimer Park in Nottinghamshire, where the honeymoon was to be spent. Would for their sakes I had the pen of the renowned Jenkins—or of Catullus!

"Hespere, qui caelo lucet iucundior ignis."

No: I must record occurrences far less interesting. Mine is the unheroic task to describe Paul Veryan's career at a time when excitement was succeeded by monotony—when affairs looked very gloomy indeed.

Paul had not been extravagant during his secretaryship; but marriage and its comitants are expensive, and he had no very large sum of money in hand when he took his furnished cottage by the Thames. He was resolved, however, to work, and work he did, valiantly; but his brain did not seem to have its customary power of production, and what he produced had less luck than usual.

It has been asserted that authors ought not to marry, and many unhappy instances have been brought forward in support of the thesis. Everyone who has any knowledge of modern Bohemia could name several

cases of most unfortunate marriages; but whether the men, if they had not been writers, would not have made their wives just as miserable, may be considered doubtful. The class of author who ought not to marry, ought not, in my opinion, to exist. Why ought not the fellow whose wretched wife (I see this very day) has attempted to commit suicide, to be allowed to have a wife? Because he is cruel and careless; because he mistakes his flippant brilliancy for genius, and thinks it a shame to have to work for his living; because he has no conscience, no honour, no inclination to perform the duties of manhood. Well, is there anything to be said in favour of such a fellow's existing at all? Is he to be tolerated as a social nuisance because he can write you a cleverish leader, or some smart verse for a comic periodical? I really cannot see it. He lives upon tradesmen and his friends; he

hates work ; he thinks himself quite justified in discarding his wife because he is tired of her, and leaving the poor woman to choose between the workhouse and the Thames. In what respect is he better than any purposeless vagabond who lives on mendicity ? Certes, he is worse : for he has had some education, and might be useful in the world if he would.

In the London of to-day there are a set of men who earn a scanty and precarious livelihood by the production of a class of writing which the world could very well do without. It is Grub Street over again ; but Grub Street veneered with gentility. The scribbler of Johnson's time knew his place ; did not set up for being a gentleman and a scholar ; did not think that he belonged to the aristocracy of genius, and that people who did not trouble themselves to use pen and ink were immeasurably his

inferiors. No, he confessed himself the shabby rogue that he was, and obeyed his masters, the publishers, and thankfully received what they deigned to give him. But his successor is a gentleman, "forsooth"—as the Prime Minister would say; his ancestors fought at Agincourt, you may be sure; he has quite a noble contempt for people who work for their living. Concerning what he writes the less said the better: it just does for foolish people to read when travelling by railway, at which time wise people will not read at all.

Well, this class of author ought not to exist, and *a fortiori* ought not to marry. But whoso thinks that men of real genius should not marry, let him read Browning's *One Word More*—or the final passage of the prologue to *The Ring and the Book*.

"God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures
Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,
One to show a woman when he loves her."

Herein I think the poet is too generous. There are some creatures, I fear, so mean that they cannot love a woman.

Paul Veryan knew that he had done well to marry, yet he was not quite satisfied with himself. He doubted whether he had been prudent in taking Aurora from her quiet comfort into a world of care. She had lived a tranquil easy life; with duties that might be monotonous yet were generally pleasant; with a comfortable income from her own exertions—and a most amiable uncle to gratify her with luxuries. Now she was the wife of a man who earned his living by his brain, and who at the moment found it difficult to earn as much as he wanted.

True, there was Sir Raoul Monchenci's splendid legacy, but this for the present only increased his trouble. The affair was in Chancery; he had to see lawyers and fee lawyers; scarcely a day passed without his

being subjected to some fresh worry in connexion with the affair. At length he could stand it no longer : one morning, when the post brought him a formidable document from Lincoln's Inn, he said to his wife—

“Aurora, my pet, I think I'll give up this confounded property. The mere details of the suit worry me so that I am unfit to write. I get duller and duller every day, and shall reach the level of *The Gentle Life* at last. Besides, these fellows want such a lot of money, and you know how precious little we have left.”

Aurora might be forgiven some reluctance to relinquish such a splendid vision as that which Sir Raoul's will placed before her eager young eyes.

“Had you not better ask somebody's advice before deciding, Paul? Speak to Mr. Westbrook, or write to Lord Latimer.”

“No,” said Paul. “I know exactly what

the Earl would do ; he'd offer me money to go on with the affair. I should be just as much worried—more so, indeed, for I might never be able to repay him. Besides, my dear child, you remember that from the very first I had serious doubts whether I had any right to this money—and if I had the right, whether it would be wise to accept such a tremendous responsibility. I would rather not prolong the annoyance by asking advice. At present I am so worried that I can neither work nor sleep. I dream of law and lawyers ; my brain refuses to obey my will. Write a letter for me to these people at Lincoln's Inn, and tell them I shall not defend the action, and they may let Sir Arthur's solicitors know my intention at once."

Aurora obeyed : and, when the letter was gone to the post, Paul felt a wonderful spring of relief.

“We’ll have a holiday this afternoon,” he said, quite gaily. “We’ll take the boat, and you shall row, and I’ll steer and smoke, and the dogs shall have a swim—and if Growl attacks the swans, I’ll defend him with the boathook.”

Thus did they: and that evening Paul found his brain in better condition, and worked with some enjoyment. But, when that delicate engine the brain is thus affected, there is no such thing as immediate cure: the nervous tension returns, even when the exciting cause is entirely removed.

Hence Paul did not at once recover his ancient power and facility: and, as he now was entirely dependent on his work, with a wife whom he desired to keep perfectly free from trouble, it was “hard lines” for him. Moreover, he had the misfortune to do a good deal of work for publishers and editors not of the first grade—people who

never paid till they were obliged. There are princely publishers and editors, as I have excellent reason to know ; men who pay liberally and punctually, and are literature's best possible patrons. But there are also small adventurous capitalists, who engage in doubtful speculations : and writers who have not made a public are glad to find work anywhere. How it worried Paul, when an article was written and printed, to have to write a dozen letters before he could obtain payment for it ! If he did not pay for his mutton, his butcher would decline to send any more : but he could not afford to deal in the same way with the editor who delayed to send him a cheque. So he had to waste much of his time in being dunned, and in dunning others ; and this sort of thing is injurious both to a man's facility of production and to the quality of what he produces.

In his old days of bachelorhood little would he have cared. Then would he have gaily sung with Thackeray :—

“ Care, like a dun,
Lurks at the gate :
Let the dog wait.
Happy we'll be.”

Throw trouble to the winds. If we can't afford whitebait and Château Yquem at Greenwich, why, we'll have a steak and some stout at the Cheese. When there is nobody but oneself to suffer, the ills of life are trivial ; but Paul Veryan had a wife whom he loved, and so his smallest troubles looked serious.

One morning there lay on the breakfast-table three or four blue envelopes, every one of which contained a statement that the writer was very much in want of money. They had all bills to make up by a very early date. Paul, who had been planning an article that he thought would be charm-

ing, while he bathed and dressed, found it all slip out of his brain, while a vision of irate tradesmen arose before his eyes.

“I must go to town this morning, Aurora,” he said, as his wife entered the room, as fresh as her rosy-fingered eponyma. “I shall beard Braggles in his den: he must owe me at least twenty pounds. It is a great nuisance: I wanted to do a good morning’s work.”

So he started, directly after breakfast: and Aurora, having a notion in her small head, started half an hour later, and caught the next train.

She was back at home hours before her husband, who indeed did not arrive till just before dinner, and then with anything but a happy countenance.

“You look tired, Paul,” she said.

“Not so much tired as bothered, my child. All this precious day’s money-hunting has

resulted in only two guineas, which they owed me for a squib in the *Papyrus*. I've called six times on Braggles, without being able to get hold of him, so I left him as ferocious a note as I could write. Saw nobody in town but Tom Harington, who consoled me with seltzer and brandy. I suppose I must waste another day to-morrow."

"No, dear," said Aurora, "we'll manage without."

And therewith the cunning minx produced a roll of crisp bank notes, to the fabulous amount of fifty pounds.

"Why, where in the world did you get this?" asked Paul. "Have you been robbing the Bank of England?"

And Aurora confessed that, anxious to relieve Paul's anxiety, she had paid a visit to a certain Mr. Attenborough, and had left in his possession Lord Latimer's princely present of turquoises and pearls.

"If you are not worried, Paul," she urged, "you will soon make money enough to get it back."

"You are a good little girl," he said, "and we'll get you your jewelry again. You've given me quite an appetite for dinner. By Jove though, I daresay I could have got the money on that wonderful old ring."

"O don't part with that! I'm superstitious about it."

"All right," quoth Paul. "Don't I want my mutton? To-morrow morning I'll just go round and pay those fellows, and give them a lecture on their impertinence in being so confoundedly troublesome."

Which he did—and was listened to with that humility which is one of the two moods of the Great British tradesman.

CHAPTER XVII.

UP-HILL WORK.

"We poets in our youth begin in gladness,
But thereof comes in the end despondency and madness."

AFTER this, Paul's affairs became a trifle better, though still he had his troubles. And of course Aurora had hers. In addition to those which came upon her by reason of her intense and loving sympathy with her husband, she had trouble in her own province. She wanted to economise; she had, of course, no domestic experience; and servants in small families are the sworn enemies of economy. They think it shabby to make the culinary art a means of saving money; will throw away the materials of the dainti-

est dishes rather than be troubled to prepare them. Young wives, I suspect, often find their greatest annoyance in their kitchen. Aurora was almost in despair at first ; but she possessed perseverance and pluck ; so she studied manuals of cookery, and in course of time conquered her cook. And when this was effected, she had the extreme satisfaction of knowing that her butcher's bills were reduced by about fifty per cent.

Next to the tyranny of respectability—of what Mrs. Grundy is likely to say—the tyranny of domestic servants falls heaviest on middle-class English life. “No man is a hero to his valet,” says the adage ; but is one woman in five thousand heroine enough to manage her cook ?

Paul worked hard, and began to keep his head comfortably above water. But it was unsatisfactory work. It seems to a casual observer easy business to write two or three

leaders a week, two or three articles of magazine "padding" a month. It is not so easy as it seems. To produce a continuous supply of this sort of thing is apt to exhaust the brain. And it is certainly not worth doing, especially for a man of Paul's type. He could not feel strong interest in the multifarious topics on which it was necessary for him to write in the evening journal to which he contributed. He could not agree with the worthy proprietor that the chief of his own party was a man of transcendent genius and stainless honour, while the chief of the opposite party was a dull fellow and completely unscrupulous. He hated to fill seven or eight pages of a magazine with something sketchy and readable. He was dissatisfied with his work. A man in that condition never does his work well.

One afternoon Westbrook had looked in, with some choice flowers for Aurora, whose

delight in flowers was a passion. They strolled out together, and Paul grumbled over the state of things with his friend.

"I'd like to be a grocer," he said, "or a greengrocer—anything whereby to earn an honest living. If I were not compelled to write for bread, I believe I could write something worth reading, and that possibly might live: as it is, I am ashamed of myself every time I put pen to paper."

"But you have some leisure hours," urged Westbrook. "Why not occupy them with work of a higher order?"

"I'm frightfully idle. Besides, when I have been wearing myself out on work I detest, I am in no humour for anything better."

"Write a novel," said Westbrook.

"What!"

"I am quite serious. With your experience of life, if you once set a group of characters in motion they would soon become

interesting. I am going to write a novel."

"You!"

"Yes, I. In the midst of looking after my vines and peach trees, I have been gradually building up a plot: and I have serious thoughts of beginning the first chapter to-night. Suppose you do likewise, and we'll see who finishes first—and then who first finds a publisher."

"I could never construct a plot," said Paul. "When I read novels, which I did at one time for the purpose of reviewing them, their plots always seemed to me such an atrocious absurdity. I don't perceive any plots in life. It is a continuous chain of events, without beginning, middle, or end. No novelist except Thackeray seems to me to reflect this essential condition of life."

"Then write like Thackeray."

"Easy to say. Imitate the inimitable."

"Well, at any rate ignore plot, and rely

upon character, You can paint character, I am certain."

"I could put everybody I know in a novel," quoth Paul, "if that's what you mean—and be sent to Coventry by the whole set of you. But painting character is not so simple. Most writers paint just the eccentricities of character, forgetting that there are more points of likeness than of unlikeness between two human beings."

"Well, you seem up in the metaphysics of novel-writing," said Westbrook, "Come, say you'll try it."

"I'll see about it," replied Paul.

He did more. He actually went to work: and, though he certainly failed in producing anything that remotely resembled a plot, he managed to portray some characters and set them in motion. The ultimate fate of his story will appear in due season.

That same afternoon, while Westbrook

and Paul were strolling, Aurora also had visitors. They were Miss Anastasia Brabazon and her niece.

"What superb flowers!" said Miss Anastasia; for Aurora had just placed Westbrook's gift in her vases. "They are finer than I can ever get."

"We have a friend within a few miles who is famous for his gardens. His fruit is equal to his flowers. There never were such grapes, I think."

"Do you know," said Miss Anastasia, "this little Agnes is going to be married, and wants to tell you all about it?"

"Not to Mr. Lanyon," said Aurora, with a laugh.

"O dear no," said Miss Anastasia. "Lanyon would not have her now, I assure you. He is engaged to a Countess dowager, and will be her fourth husband. I suspect her ladyship's entertainments will be the great

attractions next season. But come, Mrs. Veryan, leave me alone here awhile, and take that child into the garden, and hear her infantile story. I know she's longing to tell you, and she's dreadfully afraid of me. I shall be quite content to look at your flowers for half an hour."

So Aurora heard from Agnes that she was going to marry Mr. Grant; and that she thought she loved him very much, only she supposed it was wrong to love him very much before she was married to him; and that once she thought she liked Mr. Veryan—but then he was much too good for her.

"You little hypocrite!" said Aurora. "You know you think your lover is worth a dozen of my husband."

And I have not the slightest doubt she did. What a happy thing it is that every woman thinks her own husband the best and the cleverest man in the world!

* * * * *

Paul got so interested in his novel, and so anxious to finish it and turn it, if possible, into money, that he worked too hard. Westbrook happened to be busy in his gardens, so that for some time they did not meet; and Veryan had nothing to divert his mind from his occupation. Now there are some brains that no amount of hard work seems to injure—and I envy their fortunate possessors: but Paul's was a more delicate machine, and would not bear too constant a pressure. Consequently there came a time when he found his brain sluggish, and incapable of work. Of course he did not accept the warning, and stop; he believed in the strength of his own constitution; he forced himself to proceed, employing occasionally the stimulus of wine. He found that what he wrote under such difficulty

seemed often superior to what he produced when in the humour.

Then came other symptoms—unpleasant dreams, incapacity to control the thoughts, unaccountable dejection. He disregarded them, and worked on. At length the machine altogether gave way: there came a pain across the brow from temple to temple, as if it were crushed by some iron implement of torture. Work was impossible, and Paul reluctantly submitted to his fate.

So our poor Aurora, just as the horizon looked a trifle brighter, and there seemed good reason to hope that the struggle for existence was over, found herself worse off than ever. Hers was a sanguine temper; besides, she had full faith in her husband's power and genius. But what could she do now? All other troubles seemed easy to bear, in comparison with this: to see Paul ill and despondent was more than she could endure. However, she had heard him speak

of his friend Dr. Montagu, so sent off at once for that most cheerful and decisive of physicians.

The doctor came ; saw in an instant what was the matter ; prescribed in his usual way for a complaint which he, the sworn friend and adviser of men of letters, had seen times without number. What remedies he administered I cannot say : but Paul in a few days grew more like himself, and wanted to set to work again.

“You must not do it,” said Dr. Montagu. “You absolutely must be idle for a week or two. The public must wait for this novel you are writing. Give your brain a holiday, and you will come back to your work like a giant refreshed. You are close to the Thames : get out on it in the sunny afternoons : be passive, receptive : live like a lotos-eater.”

“Lotos does not grow in England,” said

Paul, "and if I don't work, how am I to pay for my mutton?"

"You *must* rest," reiterated Dr. Montagu. "Your choice is between a little temporary annoyance and permanent incapacity. You cannot doubt which to choose."

So Paul found himself most reluctantly compelled to be idle. And, though I believe he had as fine a natural capacity for indolence as any man living, yet this enforced abstinence from work was torture. He paced his pleasant lawn for hours, moodily meditating over his misfortunes. When he and his wife and his dogs took to the Thames, though he tried very hard to seem cheerful, he was always fretting over his position. Poverty is hard to bear. Still, by the aid of health it may be endured—ay, and conquered. But when health fails, that must indeed be a strenuous spirit which does not give way.

Paul Veryan looked back sadly to his bachelor days. Troubles seemed trifles in those old times, when he was in chambers with Tom Harington. There was nobody but himself to suffer—and what was there which he could not easily endure? Now he had brought into the sphere of his destiny a woman whom he loved with a profound passion: and she, whom he had foolishly fancied he could make happy, must of necessity share all his troubles. Why had he been so selfish as to marry Aurora, without having the power to secure her from sordid annoyances?

Paul Veryan looked farther back—to his early boyhood. He had fancied himself a poet. He had resolved to take the world by storm. He had measured himself against the great English writers whom he loved, and had felt a proud belief that he could take his place among them. Ah, how well

he remembered the wide wild downs, with woods of beech in the deep hollow valleys, and silver brooklets flashing in the sunlight, where he had rambled in his eager boyhood, sometimes reading the glorious old poetry which he loved, sometimes dreaming over works which should bring back the memory of the ancient Masters! And what had he done? Frittered away his life in trifles, having as yet produced nothing by which he would be remembered. He had never attempted to fulfil those sanguine designs of his boyhood; never cared to work at all except when gold was needed. And now—was it indeed too late? Would his brain refuse to serve him? Must he subside into a mere hack—do poor work with painful effort—and sink into utter oblivion?

Paul was *Heautontimoroumenos*. He tormented himself on all points. It seemed to

him that no act of his life had been right. Why had he married so hastily? Why had he resigned his secretaryship? Why had he given up the Chancery suit with such precipitation? With these and a hundred other questions did he harass himself to such an extent that the rest which he was compelled to take was by no means a restorative, and the anxious brain continued to oscillate between periods of over-excitement and periods of utter vacuity.

Aurora meanwhile did her utmost to prevent his brooding over his cares. She tried to persuade him that in a very short time his vigour would return. She managed matters so cleverly that the minor symptoms of impecuniosity were kept out of his way ; and as to herself, if she had possessed fifty thousand a year, she could not have seemed lighter-hearted. She came down in the morning as bright and fresh as the rose that

she wore in her bosom—and sang like a lark in the intervals of her morning's matronly arrangements—and chatted gaily to her moody lord when she got him into the boat—and got him the most appetizing little dinners, to which a bottle of Lord Latimer's wine gave perfection.

And when the long summer evenings were over, and Paul had smoked his last cigar, and uttered his final grumble, Aurora, as she knelt by her bedside, prayed passionately for his recovery. Though it may seem a trivial tragedy in my weak words, hers was a heavy and heart-breaking burden to bear.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A SURPRISE.

"Whereof, my child, would'st rather be inheritrix—
Plutus's gold or Aphrodite's merry tricks?"

ONE pleasant morning Paul Verman, feeling more vigorous than usual, proposed to his wife an expedition of adventure.

"Let us row as far as Thames Ditton," he said to his wife, "and see how Westbrook is getting on with his novel."

Aurora agreed, delighted with a proposal which showed her husband to be in better spirits. So they started the moment breakfast was over, and reached the Swan at Ditton in excellent condition. But a disappointment awaited them: Westbrook was

absent from home on business for a few days, and there was nobody to receive them but his favourite setter.

“Never mind,” said Paul, with unusual gaiety, “we’ll go down to Theodore Hook’s favourite hostelry and see if they can give us anything eatable. Westbrook has finished his novel, I suppose, and is up in town, worrying the publishers. I think I ought to warn him against Braggles.”

“You used to think Mr. Braggles very straightforward, and even generous,” interposed Aurora.

“He’s wonderfully plausible. Besides, he has a clever policy of beginning generously—and then, when he has got a man hard at work for him, of gradually passing to the other extreme. He’ll commence by giving more than a short article is worth, and end by purchasing a three volume novel at a tenth of its value.”

As they waited on the lawn in front of the Swan, a fisherman who had been busy in a punt came slowly ashore, and Paul recognized that inveterate wanderer, John Eeles. He greeted him with much cordiality: and, as Eeles had landed for the purpose of obtaining refreshments, they arranged to take their meal in company.

"I have heard wonderful tales," said Eeles, "of a big trout there is just here. He has been seen—not by me—and estimated to weigh eight pounds. So I have been here a week, trying to catch him: and I think I shall give him another week. One might be in worse quarters."

"I quite agree with you," remarked Ver-yan. "Wherever anglers and rowing men congregate, the inns and taverns are good."

When they had dined, and were smoking placidly, Paul took up a newspaper. It was the advertisement sheet of the *Times*. Since

he had been compelled to suspend his work, the sight of a newspaper had so irritated him that Aurora had ordered that none should be sent to the house: consequently Paul was wholly without information as to current events. Now, in lazy mood, he took up what is perhaps the most marvellous moiety of the world's most marvellous journal, and glanced at the second column of advertisements.

“LILY OF MAY.—Remember Richmond. Do not drive me to distraction. Our chances of happiness depend on immediate action. Write to the old address.”

This, and one or two like it, he read aloud, for the amusement of his companions. Suddenly he paused—looked very earnestly at one of the announcements—and passed it to Aurora.

“Mrs. Veryan (formerly Miss Elmore) is requested to communicate with Messrs.

Griffin and Budge, &c. &c.—when she will hear of something greatly to her advantage.”

“Well,” exclaimed Aurora, “what *can* that mean?”

“I can’t guess,” replied Paul. “Mr. Eeles, what is your opinion of this advertisement?”

“Money,” said Eeles, with much gravity, after putting on his spectacles, and slowly scanning the advertisement, as if to discover some hidden significance. “That is the only thing which a lawyer conceives to be to anybody’s advantage.”

“What shall I do?” asked Aurora.

“Communicate, of course,” said Eeles.

“Precisely,” observed Paul, “Waiter, bring a sheet of paper and an envelope.”

So a letter was written to Messrs. Griffin and Budge—soon after which they started homeward.

“I told you we should meet again,” said

Eeles to Paul, as he got into the boat. "This time I hope I have brought you luck."

It seemed that he had. Prompt reply came from Messrs. Griffin and Budge, to the effect that, under the will of Mr. Daniel Hogmire of the Old Jewry, and of Islington, Mrs. Veryan took a legacy of ten thousand pounds, at present invested in consols.

The amorous Hogmire had been so busy persecuting his niece that he had not found time to alter his will made in days when she was his special favourite: hence it occurred that the liberal legacy which he had designed for her was secured to her by his burial in the treacherous quicksand between Gutterness and Tosseth.

Of a verity our heroine was delighted. Now, she thought to herself, Paul could rest with a clear conscience, and wait for his brain to recover its pristine strength. *She*

was not going to resign the legacy on any casuistical scruple ; else the fact that if Hogmire had lived he would have altered his will might have given her an opportunity. But no : Paul might do these Quixotic things if he pleased—Aurora knew better.

As to Paul himself, such was the perversity of his temper that he did not rejoice half so much as he ought over this manifest interposition of Providence. He abhorred the idea of having any of Hogmire's money. Moreover, when he married, he was proud to think that his wife had not a farthing, and that he should give her all she needed by his own unaided exertions. And now his intellectual faculty had broken down, under the work required from it—and he should be indebted to his wife and her detested uncle for money which would enable him to rest and recruit himself.

Paul was positively sulky about it. Very

few people would receive in that way a legacy of ten thousand pounds, especially when it came so opportunely. But Veryan was an unreasonable animal, as anyone who reads this story will allow : and he gave his wife more trouble at this period than at any other time since their marriage. She, being very patient and loving, and feeling that now their mere material cares were over, bore with him like—I was going to say an angel. I prefer to say—like a woman.

Just about the time the money was transferred they had a casual visit from Dr. Montagu. He was delighted with his patient's good fortune.

“Now, Veryan,” he said, “I’ll prescribe for you. Go away to the seaside : you want ozone, and you want iodine. Don’t go to a big watering-place : find a wild fishing village, unvisited by swells and cads. By the way, I know a place—on the coast about

five miles from Oceanborough. I forget the name at this moment : but an old friend and patient of mine has a house there : and he is going to Italy for a time. I know he'll be glad to let the place furnished. What do you say ? Shall I write to him ?"

Paul acceded : and in the course of a fortnight he and his wife were snugly settled in the quaintest and most solitary of seaside residences, which Dr. Montagu's friend, a most original and eccentric personage, had built for his own delectation. It was wedged into a corner of the cliffs, looking southward, with a splendid sea view : a building of a single story, with rooms in its centre, for habitation amid the storms of winter, lighted by skylights. So well was the place chosen, that its inhabitants had a small sandy cove all to themselves, walled in at high water by cliffs which ran down on each side. If Aurora wanted to play the nereid,

she could step in her dressing-gown from her bedroom window to the lawn, and thence to the most perfect sands, without a pebble or a shell to graze her dainty foot.

Here Paul began to get better. He found a rifle on the premises, and shot seagulls; he found a shrimp-net, and waded into the sparkling water, and caught delicious prawns; he found an undecked sailing-boat, with a tough young salt to look after it, and he and Aurora got many a pleasant little cruise. Tom (the young salt in question) supplied them with lobsters from the private lobster-pots of the owner of Cliff Cottage: and altogether they lived in as simple and primitive a way as if they had been in Ithaca with Odysseus, or on my favourite island of Sark . . . whose seigneur is as lucky a man as the son of Laërtes.

Paul soon got rid of his discontent—the sea breezes blew it away; and soon regained

his vigour, as he drank the recuperative draughts administered day after day by "sage Hippotades." It struck him that he was an awful fool for quarrelling with his bread-and-butter: so by-and-by he magnanimously forgave his wife for having endowed him with ten thousand pounds, and set to work upon his novel with tremendous energy. Nobody but Dr. Montagu knew where he was—so he got no correspondence to interrupt him. In London he was missed by his friends, and by certain publishers and editors; indeed, his disappearance caused almost as much wonderment as when Waring left Robert Browning's arm on that memorable night,

"The snowiest in all December,"

as they were walking home after supper, and vanished altogether—for I don't believe it was he whom somebody saw at Trieste.

So Paul passed a joyous time, unruffled

by the world; and his wife was perfectly happy. Their days were spent between the cliffs and the sands and the sea; and after dinner, when the lamps were lighted, and the dogs were coiled before the fire (always seasonable at night by the sea) and Aurora had taken her knitting (she liked to knit and look at her husband), Paul worked away in high spirits at that famous novel of his, whose freedom of speech and independence of thought gave great offence to many highly respectable critics. It is shocking to think that numerous misguided persons read the novel, notwithstanding; some indeed—such is the perversity of human nature—*because* they were warned on no account to do so.

CHAPTER XIX.

LORD LATIMER AT HOME.

“As for that, pass the bottle and damn the expense :
 I’ve seen it observed by a writer of sense,
 That the labouring classes could scarce live a day
 If people like us didn’t eat, drink, and pay.”

CAPRICE was full of visitors. The Earl had suffered from a touch of chiragra, and wanted life around him as he convalesced. The Earl was an oinobiblogynomaniac. He understood the art of living better than most men : he was original, and loved new combinations of existence ; he was sympathetic, and thoroughly enjoyed the society of all classes of men, if only they were not vulgar. And now, having had to fret a few weeks away in a sick-chamber, he

determined to surround himself with a little gaiety as a recompense.

He had not been utterly dull; he was a man of too many resources. Not that the Earl was a great reader. He was a man of few books. He knew his Shakespeare well; he read Ben Jonson and Beaumont and Fletcher, and their peers; he liked the Charles II. comedy, and the lyrics of Herrick and Suckling, and the prose of Laurence Sterne. He thought *Paradise Lost* a bore, but considered *Comus* a pretty poem; and would maintain that Goldsmith's *Retaliation* was worth all the works of Doctor Samuel Johnson. Coming to later times, he loved Landor and Byron, considered Wordsworth and Shelley a couple of nuisances, and pronounced Scott unreadable. He thought Thackeray tiresome and Dickens absurd, but could read with some pleasure one or two of Disraeli's novels.

"If that man, sir," he would say, "had not wasted his time upon politics, in which he has done us more harm than good, he might have been a very passable novelist."

Enthusiastic Disraelites would defend their idol, but the Earl could not be brought to see it.

"He's too clever by half. We want common-place men for politicians, as Swift told Bolingbroke. He has run us off the rail, and heaven knows whether we shall ever get on again. However, the commonwealth will last my time."

The Earl read no journals; he used to make his secretary filter and condense the day's news for him. But his favourite reading was the correspondence of one or two friends, who understood the lost art of letter-writing. Lord Latimer was a master of this art: and, if the letters which he has written throughout his long life shall ever be pub-

lished, they will be no common contribution to the political and social history of the time. His correspondents (one of the best of whom was Miss Anastasia Brabazon) always did their utmost to amuse him when his enemy, the gout, was upon him : and so it happened that, though confined to his own rooms at Caprice, he managed to spend the time pleasantly enough.

Now, having escaped from solitary confinement, he determined to enjoy a contrast. He got Thorold and Lady Lucy to stay at Caprice. He invited a whole bevy of pretty women—a whole host of brilliant men. He induced Miss Anastasia to come : and that excellent old lady, wanting company after the loss of her grand-niece, brought with her Diana Dezii, whom she had taken under her patronage when she found her to be in trouble.

“ You shall come to Lord Latimer’s with

me," she said, "and I'll tell him all about the wicked manager, and you may be sure he won't let him annoy you."

Diana was especially glad, since she escaped from her cousin Giuseppe, who was becoming a greater nuisance to her everyday.

The Earl wanted to ask Paul and his wife; but where were they? Nobody knew. He caused inquiry to be made in all directions, but could obtain no intelligence. He grew anxious and annoyed, for he had a thorough liking for both Paul and Aurora. Paul's originality of character had first attracted him: and, when he met Aurora by the deathbed of his old friend, Sir Raoul Monchenci, he took an immediate fancy for her. Paul, the ungrateful rascal, though he had actually not yet exhausted the Earl's wine, was so jolly at Cliff Cottage, and so absorbed in his novel, that he did not write to his patron.

It was Lord Latimer's habit to hear the visitors' list, published in the daily paper of Oceanborough, read to him every morning—so that if there were any arrivals whom he knew, they might be brought into his circle. One morning, when Lady Lucy Thorold happened to be the reader, there occurred a couple.

"There is Sir Arthur Monchenci at the Giant Hotel, papa," she said.

"I don't care much about him," remarked the Earl: "but we'll have him to dinner, for my old friend Sir Raoul's sake. Anybody else?"

"Who *do* you think is at the Three-decker?" she asked.

Now the Threedecker (curious name) is not one of Oceanborough's colossal hotels. Some wicked wit wrote with a diamond on a window of the Giant—

"If dinners are dear, 'tis to pay for the building :
I'd like more of your carving, and less of your gilding."

At the Threedecker there is no gilding at all (though there are some quaint old pictures) but the carving is excellent good. Thereto come all men of letters and of art who frequent Oceanborough : for such men love good dinners, and do not love size and splendour. Thither, on this occasion, had come that comrade and benefactor of men of letters and of art—Dr. Edwin Montagu.

"O we must send a carriage for the doctor at once," said Lord Latimer, when his daughter mentioned him. "He must come and stay here. I'll write him a note immediately. He is one of the few doctors whose medicine and conversation are both sound."

It was from Dr. Montagu that the Earl heard of Paul Veryan. The Doctor reached Caprice in good time for luncheon, and after

that meal the Earl said he should take a drive. Would Dr. Montagu come with him?

"I don't much care to drive up and down the Esplanade all the afternoon, though it would do my practice a world of good to be seen with your Lordship. But there's a pet patient of mine a few miles out of the town that I should like to go and see."

"We'll take you there," said the Earl. "Who is your patient? A lady, I should judge from your eagerness to pay the visit."

"No indeed. He has a very charming wife; but she needs no prescriptions. Veryan is my patient's name."

"What, Paul Veryan! Why I have been searching for him to bring him and his wife here—and nobody could tell me where he was. That young fellow is a favourite of mine—and I think his wife delightful. Has he been ill?"

"Over-worked and very anxious," said the Doctor. "His brain wouldn't stand it."

"And of course he was too proud to apply to me," said the Earl. "But how about Sir Raoul Monchenci's legacy? You heard of it, no doubt. Will he get it?"

"That was one of the chief worries. The present baronet instituted a Chancery suit; and poor Veryan was so annoyed that he resigned his claim. Then Sir Arthur's lawyer wrote to say, with extreme liberality, that he would not press for the payment of his costs."

"Well," said the Earl, "I think this is perfectly abominable. Veryan would have won the suit if he had persevered. Arthur Monchenci would have been heartily glad to accept and compromise, and to have taken half the money. If he had any generosity or any sense of justice he would have insisted on Veryan's receiving a substantial sum

of money, and I shall tell him so. I never heard of a more disgraceful business."

Paul Veryan's solitude was disturbed that day. Lord Latimer's carriage reached the quaint gate-way of Cliff Cottage early in the afternoon. Paul and Aurora, strolling upon the sands, were somewhat surprised to see their two kind friends.

"You have quite cured me, Doctor," said Paul, gaily. "This last prescription of yours was a thorough remedy."

Certainly Paul and his wife looked peculiarly well, and as if the mixture of bathing, shrimping, lobster-fishing, knitting and novel writing, agreed with them excellently.

"But I want to interrupt your holiday," said the Earl. "Mrs. Veryan must not be allowed to blush unseen—she's much too fair a flower. And you, Veryan, will get some ideas for the final chapters of your story if you plunge into society awhile.

Poets, you know, may be subjective, as poor old Coleridge used to say, but I take it that a novelist must be objective. You have been living in the desert for a long time now : you must come to my oasis for a change."

"I should like to get my work done first," said Paul. "When one gets near the end of a book one becomes—at least I become—very eager to finish, very doubtful whether it is worth finishing at all, and prodigiously stupid and incapable of finishing properly. I am just in that state at this moment. If I don't fight my way to the end at once, I shall never get there."

"Nonsense," said Lord Latimer, with a laugh. "You have had too much of your wife's company—and I dare say she has had enough of yours. It does no man—not even a poet, my dear Paul—any good to seclude himself as you are doing . . .

to shut himself up with the sea and his wife. My old friend Wordsworth, whose poetry I always thought uncommonly like prose, made this grand mistake. Byron was wiser. Take my advice, my young friend. Forget your novel and bring Mrs. Veryan to Caprice. We want you both. We are going to act charades and play proverbs and sing ballads and otherwise distinguish ourselves. A poet and his bride are precisely our desideratum. And when you have seen our beauties and our uglinesses, our wits and our blockheads, you will have abundant material for your closing chapters. Now, say when will you come? I will send over the omnibus, and have your rooms ready for you."

Of course the Earl was not to be refused, and it was at length agreed that Paul and Aurora should migrate on the following day. And so, within twenty-four hours, they were installed in charming rooms at

Caprice, a house—as the reader knows—where everything was perfection. While the patient and cheerful Aurora arranged her paraphernalia in the wardrobes, Paul smoked a cigar on the balcony of their private sitting-room, which overlooked delicious gardens, with the sea just seen through an avenue of young lime trees, and grumbled to himself at being brought from his poetic solitude to associate with Lord Latimer's guests. He liked the change at heart, no doubt: but he would not confess that liking even to himself.

There was a brilliant company at dinner, and among them young Sir Arthur Monchenci, our friend's protagonist in equity. His presence did not tend to diminish Paul's ill-humour. One thing did, however, and that was the presence of Lady Lucy Thorold—who, as a young wife, was even more perilously fascinating than as a maid. She

liked Paul, we know; and he had taken her in to dinner and was sitting next her; and they had quite a pleasant colloquy together all the time. Lady Lucy was a charming little satirist, and made great fun of the rather dull and very priggish Sir Arthur Monchenci, and of the young Viscount Velvetuft, who was so great a favourite in the very highest circles that it was quite amazing he should be at Caprice, and of little Lord Strangeways, who knew all the languages of the East (though he could never master English), and had travelled in the disguise of a dervish through regions unknown to any other European, and of the Reverend Clement Chasuble, Ritualist of the first force, who had recently excommunicated the Archbishop of Canterbury, and of Captain Trevor, the famous amateur actor, who had come to Caprice to be useful—ay, and of a good many others.

Nor did her laughing satire spare the ladies. The dignified Countess of Glaramara, with her two magnificent daughters, Lady Persephone and Lady Penelope Ingleborough, were intended by Providence either for abject worship or irrepressible laughter. Lady Lucy preferred the latter. Then there was Miss Ophelia Oliphant, amateur actress and poetess, who held herself the superior of any living creature in both those vocations, and who moreover most firmly believed herself the possessor of the first soprano voice in the world, and quite fit to be a *prima donna*.

"I shall be delighted to see her when Diana Dezii sings presently," said the lively satirist.

"You think she will be ashamed of her inferiority," said Paul.

"O dear no. She will laugh at the idea of Diana's having any voice, or knowing any-

thing about music. She is incapable of thinking anybody superior to herself."

"Happy young woman!" ejaculated Paul.
"Such sublime conceit is better than genius."

It is certainly a great endowment, and yields to its possessor an immense amount of gratification—while genius, I suppose, though it brings happiness, brings also torture. So at least I have been informed by gentlemen who declare that they possess it. Mr. Disraeli puts material felicity as consisting in the possession of ten thousand a year, while the world imagines you have only five thousand. Intellectual felicity, on the other hand, belongs in all probability to the person who has no genius, but who believes that he has, and manages to make the world believe it.

The Earl was as good as his word in reference to Sir Arthur Monchenci. He got him into the library, and asked him frankly

whether what he heard was true—that he intended to take advantage of Veryan's relinquishing the law-suit, and to offer him no compensation.

"I consider that I have treated him liberally, my lord," said the young baronet. I might have compelled him to pay my costs, which amounted to nearly a hundred pounds."

"A hundred pounds!" exclaimed the Earl. "Why, he has made you a present of more than three hundred thousand."

"He best knew the weakness of his own case, I presume," said Sir Arthur. "I appealed to the law, and was content to abide by the consequences. By declining to defend the suit, he showed that he had no right to the property. He certainly has no claim on me."

"By Jove, Sir Arthur Monchenci," said the Earl in his ire, "you take things coolly.

You are my guest, and I will not tell you what I think of your conduct. *Noblesse oblige*, they say: I suppose it doesn't apply to baronets."

Therewith the Earl gave Sir Arthur a very stately bow, and left the library.

"I'll tell you what it is, Montagu," he said, when he had recounted this colloquy to the Doctor, "some of the young fellows of this generation are too mean to live. That boy is a regular Harpagon. To think there is the same blood in his veins as in dear old Raoul's, who could not have thought a mean thought! Pshaw, it doesn't matter. Veryan doesn't want any of the money; and we won't have Sir Arthur to dinner again."

"It is very fortunate, in my opinion, that Veryan got none of that money," said the Doctor. "He's a brilliant fellow, but intolerably lazy—he would have turned epi-

cure or wandered all over the world, or wasted his life in some other eccentric manner. Now, as he has only just enough to exist upon in a sordid manner, he'll be compelled to work, and we shall get some readable books from him."

"Ah," said Lord Latimer, laughing, "I see your line of argument. It is just like catching a nightingale, and putting out his eyes, and keeping him in a cage.

'Muta puella fuit, garrula fertur avis.'

You've got all the Daulian tragedy in a wicker cage. So, clip the poet's wings; don't let him have money enough to be independent; don't let him have a chance of exercising his splendid faculty of enjoyment; prevent him from seeing the innumerable wonders of the world. That's your policy, Doctor."

Dr. Montagu did not try to defend him-

self against the voluble old nobleman. He simply took snuff.

"That pinch of rappee is meant as a dignified rebuke to my boyish enthusiasm," laughed the Earl. "I know you, sir. Never mind, Paul Veryan is my poet: I don't intend him to write the sort of stuff that men write for bread. When he has finished this book he is about, I shall make him take holiday and see the world."

"'Tis a perilous experiment," quoth the doctor. "Your poet is the worst creature in the world to tame. When hawking was an English sport, your falcon would fly from a lady's wrist, and kill his quarry, and come back to be fed by the falconer. I don't think it would have answered to carry an eagle on the wrist, and fly him at a heronshaw."

"Which things are an allegory," rejoined the Earl. "Never mind, Doctor, we'll see

what can be done with this eagle. If he flies off to the empyrean, why there's no more to be said. *Nous verrons.*"

CHAPTER XX.

PAUL VERYAN AT HOME.

“Do you see this ring?”

BROWNING.

THE Earl's festivities at Caprice, like other joyous things, came to an end. Paul Veryan went back to Cliff Cottage, and finished his novel just in time to give up that quaint marine dwelling-place to its owner, Dr. Montagu's friend. Having taken that famous work to a publisher, with many misgivings, he and Aurora took counsel together as to what should be done next. There were grave reasons why the lady wanted to settle down permanently. They had led a wandering life since their mar-

riage—it was necessary now to think of a fixed residence. So they took to that least pleasant of all occupations, house-hunting—with very little success.

At last, however, when they were getting terribly tired of the whole business, they came quite by chance on a cottage in a green village, in the pleasant county of Herts, which was to be sold or let. It was not “a cottage of gentility.” It was a strongly-built old-fangled dwelling-place, with lawn, orchard, garden, paddock—with low wainscotted sitting-rooms, and bed-rooms on so many different levels that it was impossible to pass from any one to any other without going downstairs or upstairs. Old Father Longlegs, that shocking schismatic of the nursery, might have met with the punishment assigned to him by fate at any part of this quaint cottage. Paul and Aurora both liked it; and, when they found that it could

be purchased for about three hundred and fifty pounds, they instantly decided on the investment, and our hero became a freeholder of Hertfordshire.

Greenwell was certainly an unique hamlet. A rivulet that eventually found its way to the river Lea spread itself through what may be called the village street, so that where you would usually see a common there was substituted a remarkably fine watercress-bed. The causeways were built high above this: and Paul's new acquisition was advantageously situate on the steep side of the hill, so that it was entirely free from damp.

Cannot you imagine with what glee our hero and heroine set about the task of furnishing? Dr. Montagu, in reference to the respected Hogmire's legacy, had given Paul the same advice which Akenside (was it?) gave to Gay: "Trust to Providence and live on the principal." So Paul had gal-

lantly paid the money into Coutts's, and taken a cheque-book, and drawn a cheque just when he happened to require coin. But he had been economical : and when he had lived some months on the money, and bought his cottage, and furnished, there was considerably less than a thousand pounds gone.

Soon after they had got settled at Greenwell, Lord Latimer wrote to remind Paul that a year had passed since Sir Raoul Monchenci's death, and that there was a certain letter to open.

"I shall be in London next week," wrote the Earl. "I want to see your mansion—so I'll drive over about the middle of the week, and we'll open this mysterious package together."

Greenwell being nearly forty miles from Park Lane, the Earl had post-horses put to that famous travelling omnibus of his—and I assure you the honest villagers were rather

amazed when they saw four horses splashing through the watercress-bed with that elegant equipage.

“Upon my word this is charming, Veryan,” said the Earl, when he had walked up the steep ascent to a kind of green terrace in front of the cottage. “A nest for a poet.”

And he went all over the household with as much eagerness as if he were about to live in it.

“Any cellars?” he asked.

Paul showed him an excellent souterrain, built evidently by some one who revered good liquor.

“The very thing,” said Lord Latimer. “I’ve brought you a little wine, but, as you have room, I’ll send up a lot more. It’s not safe to leave *you* anything by will. There’s some fine old port: take care of it: Mrs. Veryan will want it soon, you know.”

“Tanto pessimus omnium poeta
Quanto tu optimus omnium patronus,”

quoted Veryan. "I don't know how to thank you, my lord."

"By enjoying the wine, and finding inspiration in it. Come, let us go to Mrs. Veryan, and open poor Raoul's letter."

The packet was opened accordingly, and was found to contain a small leather box, and a brief letter, which ran thus—

"I am a superstitious man, Paul Veryan. Living alone in this wild neighbourhood has made me so. I have felt for years that some day or other I should be visited by a stranger whom I could love. That legend of the Carn which I told you induced me to leave my ruby ring among those ancient stones: it had been lying there unnoticed I know not how long when it caught your eye. Then I knew you were the man for whom I waited. And that you bear the name of the place where I left the ring proved it even more plainly."

"Poor old Raoul!" exclaimed the Earl.
"Mad—like the rest of us. Go on, my boy."

Paul continued to read.

"I found you, Paul Veryan, the man I hoped for—the man I would have chosen to have as a son, if God had not cursed me with a sonless doom. You nobly sacrificed Lord Latimer's sinecure, when I showed you it was wrong to hold it. For marrying the girl you loved and who loved you I do not particularly praise you.

"I have left you some money. But my luck has always been so sinister that I very much doubt whether you will get it. If the young man who is my heir, and whom I have never seen, is at all like his father, he will do his utmost to secure that money for himself. You, Paul Veryan, though you could fight in the old chivalrous fashion, are not made for legal fighting: the scoundrel attorneys will soon tire you out. I don't think

you will get this money which I freely give you.

“Perhaps you will be happier without it. But I want to give you something. You will take Argo, I know, but he will not live long : he will hear me call him from the land beyond Acheron. Open the box with this letter. Its contents were given me in my early youth by a strange old Jew who died of plague at Damascus. I was a dare-devil then : I cared no more for the plague than for any mortal man. I heard that the hapless Hebrew was deserted, and went to his bedside, and held cold water to his lips, that were black with disease, and contorted with thirst and pain. Just as a lamp gives a bright flicker before expiring, so the Jew had a lucid moment before death. He pulled this very box from under his pillow.

“‘Take this, English Christian,’ he said. ‘It is yours—you are good. My daughter

is dead. My friends leave me to die like a dog. You are good—you are a Christian ; *I believe in Christ.*'

"I dipped my finger in water and made the sign of the Cross on his forehead . . . and he died. I thought of the thief who went straight to Paradise. I took the box ; there were no claimants for it. You will see what it contains. It is yours.

"If, in some fit of conscientiousness, you hand this over to my heir, I'll haunt both you and him.

"**RAOUL MONCHENCI.**"

The box contained precious stones, unset. There were several superb diamonds of perfect whiteness ; two or three oriental sapphires ; some fine rubies and emeralds, and an opal of the most magnificent quality.

"Poor old Raoul !" again exclaimed the Earl. "Shall I take these to Sir Arthur, Veryan?"

"What's your own opinion, my lord?"

"Why, that the young fellow would accept them with great pleasure—so you had better not give him the chance. These stones are not a legacy, they were a gift while Raoul was alive. Keep them, sir; don't turn them into gold until you actually want it."

"Do you think they are worth much, my lord?" asked Aurora.

"I am no great judge of diamonds, but they must be worth a trifle. However, we can solve that mystery for you. Trust the case with me, and I'll call at Hancock's and inquire."

"And you recommend me to consider them mine?" said Paul.

"Certainly. Doesn't Raoul promise to haunt you if you don't? How would you like the poor old boy's ghost to visit you every midnight, Mrs. Veryan? This is just the cottage to encourage a ghost."

“By the way,” said the Earl, after a pause, “I forgot for the moment that I know a man who is a great amateur of stones. He is a quaint old barrister, a bencher of the Outer Temple, who has long since given up the law for the pursuit of two hobbies—the collection of precious stones and the study of alchemy and astrology. He must have invested a fortune in gems. Doubtless he would be glad to buy yours. Suppose you come to town to-morrow, and we’ll visit him together.”

So on the following day the Earl and Veryan called on Mr. Todmorden at Vellum Buildings, where he occupied a noble suite of chambers pleasantly overlooking the Thames, and high enough to catch glimpses of the Surrey hills. The old lawyer, withered and wizened, with the well-known Ribstone-pippin complexion, and sparse locks of soft brown hair, and shrewd bright eyes

under bushy eyebrows, sat in the midst of queer chymical apparatus, while horoscopes and other odd calculations lay about his floor. He had one companion—a splendid raven, black as jet, looking as if he were the very bird that croaked “Never more!” from the bust of Pallas.

“Well, Todmorden,” said Lord Latimer, after introducing Paul, “you have not made any gold yet, I suppose?”

“No,” said the old gentleman, “but the identity of all metals is a certainty, and some day the transmutation will be effected.”

“Have you increased your stock of diamonds? My friend here has a few stones, and I ventured to tell him you would take the trouble to estimate their value.”

“With pleasure,” said Todmorden.

Then, taking diamond by diamond with a delicate pair of forceps, he examined each carefully with a strong lens, and afterwards

weighed them with the most delicate of balances.

“You have a treasure, sir,” he said. “These diamonds are all of the first water, and the value of such stones varies as the cube of their weight. One of the sapphires is singularly fine ; the others good but small. The rubies and emeralds are also good, but not worth more than a few hundred pounds. The opal is the finest I know, except one which belongs to the Emperor of Austria. I do not much care about opals myself, but you can easily get three thousand pounds for this one.”

Veryan was thunderstruck.

“And how about the diamonds?” said the Earl.

“Well, if ever Mr. Veryan cares to part with them, I shall be very happy to give him a cheque for fifteen thousand pounds for the diamonds and sapphires. They may perhaps be worth rather more.”

"Now, Veryan," said Lord Latimer, "what's to be done? Wouldn't Sir Arthur be delighted to grasp that case? Will you sell the stones and invest the money, or keep them to look at?"

Mr. Todmorden seemed eager for Paul's reply, but our friend said nothing.

"*I should keep them,*" said Todmorden, after a pause. "They are a safe investment, though they pay no interest. The only thing is, if we chymists discover a method of obtaining the diamond from carbon, they may suddenly become as cheap as dirt. It is a mere question of time, that. Sir Humphrey Davy very nearly did it; he got carbon hard enough to cut glass."

"I can scarcely believe," said Paul, "that those few shining stones are worth so much money. I thought their value might perhaps be two or three hundred pounds."

"You are ignorant of such matters," said Todmorden. "There is the Pitt diamond ;

it does not weigh an ounce ; the last time it was sold it brought £135,000. It is worth twice that money now, at least. There is a diamond in Brazil which we calculate, when it is cut, will be worth between five and six millions. Diamonds will always be the most valuable things in the world, until the chymists solve the problem I have talked of. And then, gentlemen, we shall be able to build houses and pave streets with diamonds, which will outlast the globe. Then we shall falsify the Red Republican's aphorism—'Edifices perish : ruins are eternal.' Then we shall realize Saint John's apocalyptic vision."

"You are an enthusiast, Todmorden," said the Earl. "Certainly the Thames Embankment would look better in diamond than in granite. If your discovery comes in time, I'll pull down Caprice, and build in precious stones."

“Keep the stones for the present, Veryan,” said Lord Latimer, when they had left Mr. Todmorden’s chambers. “You’ve got some few thousands in hand—you can go on writing with a quiet mind; if you turn those diamonds into money just now, you’ll be worrying yourself about investments, and neglecting your work. You have no genius for the Stock Exchange.”

So Paul took the stones back to Aurora, who contentedly locked them up in one of her big trunks. And they were both of them a good deal more interested in the arrival of Lord Latimer’s wine—and very much more still in the proofs of Paul’s story, which came in rapid succession from the publisher.

“’Tis pleasant, sure, to see one’s name in print :
A book’s a book, although there’s nothing in’t.”

CHAPTER XXI.

A NEW-COMER.

*Ἄμφι δὲ Φοίνικι βάλε πήχης, γοῦνα δ' ἔρριπεν
 λειμῶνι μαλακῶ μείδησε δὲ γὰρ ὑπένερθεν·
 ἐκ δ' ἔθορε πρὸ φάωγος θεαὶ δ' ὀλόλυξαν ἅπασαι·*

AS indeed why should they not? If ever the goddesses had reason to shout for joy, it was when fair-haired Leto gave birth to Apollo. If ever earth had reason to burst into a floral smile, it was when the supreme Archer, the King of Song, was first seen beneath the immortal palm-tree in the isle of Delos. What a dull dreary drab-coloured world must it have been before the earliest poet saw the light

where violet and iris and hyacinth grow on the meadowy margin of Inopus!

But I suppose that to every mother the coming of her firstborn is as the birth of Apollo over again—and the helpless infant is endowed in her fond vision with all the kingly attributes of a noble manhood. What a marvellous enigma and bundle of possibilities is every new baby that arrives! The squalling brat may be a Shakespeare perhaps, or a Nelson, or a Cromwell. What if he turn out a scamp and a rascal instead? In this odd nature of ours, the roots of virtue and of vice are curiously close together. Very different in appearance is the keen diamond, a crystal of light, from the smutty carbon which Mr. Todmorden tells us is the same thing precisely. When a hyacinth smells very strong, its odour is uncommonly like an onion's. So we can only hope your boy will be an Apollo, dear

Madam—and silently reflect that, according to the Theory of Probabilities, the odds must be many myriads to one against it.

This prelude of course signifies that Paul Veryan became the father of a boy. The youngster contrived to come just at the very moment that the novel appeared. Paul and Aurora were intensely delighted; but our hero was at the same time a little perplexed. Things were looking serious. He had increased the population of the world. He walked meditatively up and down that terrace in front of his cottage at Greenwell, and soliloquized. His son's voice could be heard through the open windows of the airy chamber above him. The boy ululated lustily.

“I wonder whether the youngster will thank me for causing him to exist,” thought Paul. “I’ve often felt rather ungrateful to my own *pater*: poor old boy, he died

when I was a little chap, and I shouldn't know him if I met him. How well I remember following his coffin, one hot summer day, stifled under a big black cloak! I was thinking all the time of a May day years before, when he and I picked hawthorn blossom together in the Kentish lanes. After he was buried, I used to think he was alive—used to look at people in the street who were like him, and always expected to meet him.”

Here there was an interlude. Paul, finding that he was growing melancholy, went indoors, and brought a bottle of the Earl's St. Peray, and a big green tumbler. He drank, and resumed.

“Birth and death are identical, say the metaphysicians. Natural therefore that when my son is born I should remember how my father died. I am only a term in a series. Now this boy is born I can retire: the race

of Veryan will go on without me. I feel like an old foggy already."

Thus absurdly was he reflecting when a footstep on the gravel made him look round: and behold Westbrook, who had walked over from the nearest railway station.

"I heartily congratulate you," he said. "I am an old bachelor, and it is too late now for me to do my duty in the world: you have been wiser in your generation. Paulus Parvulus will soon be stretching his tender hands to you from his mother's lap with lip half-open. Happy fellow that you are! What's a book to a boy? My book's out, sir, and here's a copy for you: the critics have been at it already: one fellow scarified me brilliantly in an evening paper yesterday. They'll serve yours as bad or worse. But Parvulus is safe: they can't criticize that valuable work. Now, will you give me some lunch, and some of the Earl's

wine—confounded lucky fellow you are to have Lord Latimer's cellars to go to instead of Tod-Heatly's. *I* can't drink St. Peray out of a pint tumbler."

The two friends had luncheon together: and Aurora sent down her love to Mr. Westbrook: and the healthy young squall of Parvulus at intervals broke upon their converse.

"That boy is born with a silver spoon in his mouth," says Westbrook. "An Earl for a godfather, sir: why he'll give him a gold mug that will hold a kilderkin. You may have me for the other godfather, if you choose. I'll give him no metal cups, but I'll send him grapes and nectarines galore—and he shall rub his young gums with strawberries. What does the baby poet say about

‘Plums

Ready to melt between an infant's gums?’

If you hadn't come so far north of London

I might send flowers too, but you would take refuge in this solitude. Come, let us drink to young Parvulus in a bumper of his noble godfather's choice Lafitte !”

* * * * *

Well, there soon came the day when Parvulus took his proper position in the household, and became, like the son of Themistocles, an absolute autocrat. Faith, he got names enough when they christened him—for Lady Lucy Thorold insisted on being his godmother—and so the youngster became Paul Lucius Latimer Westbrook Veryan. I have not any theories about names, like Mr. Shandy, and indeed would as soon call my son Tristram as Trismegistus—but surely a boy with such prænomina ought to have some luck in life.

The only individual who seemed aggrieved by the baby despot's supremacy was our canine friend Growl. Wag, a dog of melan-

choly and metaphysical temperament, took it as a circumstance entirely inexplicable ; and was wont to retire into a corner, and watch Paul the younger with great grave thoughtful eyes, and meditate silently on the problem. Tory, a big young mastiff whom Paul had purchased as guardian of his Greenwell demesne, accepted the boy as his master at once, and could scarcely be induced to leave him, even when there was a huge bone to masticate. But Growl was indignant. He had tolerated Aurora : though, if he could have spoken, he would have asked Paul what in the world he wanted of a wife, with such a companion as Growl. This baby, however, was too much—especially as the said baby, as soon as it was able to crawl about the floor, outraged Growl's dignity by pulling his tail.

Let us leave Paul and Aurora and their boy in their quiet nest at Greenwell. A

fragment of their life we have tried to trace: and surely they are happy now—whatever their future may be. Yet is anybody ever quite happy in the present? Are we not always looking forward to something or other—though it be only a book to read, or a walk in the country, or the dinner that is to follow that walk? There is no present. See where run the crystal waters of a brook: they are gone as we gaze; it is another stream while our words are spoken. I cannot stay the elusive stream of time. The future is upon me before I can write a sentence—ay, before I can form a letter. There is no present: who then can blame Paul and Aurora, as they sit on their terrace under the shadow of an Oriental plane which would have driven Xerxes wild with delight—and look southward where vague metropolitan towers loom through drifts of smoke—that they forget the magic beauty

of the time, and while their young son prattles in his "little language," are building aërial castles of which he—as Prime Minister or Commander-in-Chief or Lord Chancellor or Archbishop of Canterbury, or greatest writer of the age—is the happy and famous inhabitant?

Who shall blame them, I ask? Not I. They grew quite serious on the matter—Aurora, especially.

"So you think that imp would look well in an Archbishop's costume," said Paul, "or on a tall horse with a big sword winning another Waterloo. But by the time he's of age, Gladstone will have disestablished the Church, and Bright will have abolished war."

"You need not laugh at me," said Aurora. "Come here, Paul darling: Papa's laughing at me."

"Not a bit of it, my child. But nothing

is certain, you know, except the unforeseen. These are pleasant visions for you and me on a calm summer evening—and I hope the boy will be doing good work in the world, with as loving a wife as his mother to help him, in summers far remote, when we both sleep soundly under the grass. But they are dreams of the Ivory Gate, my own.”

True enough, my friend Paul: nor need either you or I, or any of my readers, desire to look at the future through the Gate of Horn. Let our dreams come *διὰ πριστοῦ ἐλέφαντος*. Deep in the heart of man dwells the imperishable faith that beyond the trouble and turmoil of life—beyond its scenes of wild pleasure and strange misery—there lies a region of happy calm. Surely it is of that realm—the land which is very far off . . . and yet how terribly near!—that we catch divine glimpses through the visionary vista of the Ivory Gate.

EPILOGUE.

τῶν οἳ μὲν κ' ἔλθωσι διὰ πριστοῦ ἐλέφαντος,
οἳ ῥ' ἐλεφαίρονται, ἔπει' ἀκράαντα φέροντες·

I.

When, loved by poet and painter,
The sunrise fills the sky,
When night's gold urns wax fainter,
And in depths of amber die—
When the morn-breeze stirs the curtain,
Bearing an odorous freight . . .
Then visions strange, uncertain,
Pour thick through the Ivory Gate.

II.

Then the oars of Ithaca dip so
Silently into the sea,
That they wake not sad Calypso—
And the hero wanders free :
He breasts the ocean-furrows,
At war with the words of Fate,
And the blue tide's low susurru
Comes up to the Ivory Gate.

III.

Or, clad in hide of leopard,
 'Mid Ida's freshest dews,
Paris, the Teucrian shepherd,
 His sweet Oenone woos :
On the thought of her coming bridal
 Unuttered joy doth wait,
While the tune of the false one's idyl
 Rings soft through the Ivory Gate.

IV.

Or down from green Helvellyn
 The sough of streams I hear,
And my lazy sail is swelling
 To the winds of Windermere :
That girl with the rustic bodice
 'Mid the ferry's laughing freight
Is as fair as any goddess
 Who sweeps through the Ivory Gate.

V.

Ah, the vision of dawn is leisure—
 But the truth of day is toil,
And we pass from dreams of pleasure
 To the world's unstayed turmoil.
Perchance, beyond the River
 Which guards the realms of Fate,
Our spirits may dwell for ever
 'Mid dreams of the Ivory Gate.

THE END.

MESSRS. HURST AND BLACKETT'S

LIST OF NEW WORKS.

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MESSRS. HURST AND BLACKETT'S

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